महाभारत

The Mahābhārata of Vyasa

BOOK X

THE COMPLETE SAUPTIKA PARVA

TRANSCREATED FROM SANSKRIT

By P. Lal

THE MAHĀBHĀRATA OF VYĀSA

The Complete Sauptika Parva
Transcreated śloka-by-śloka from Sanskrit by P. Lāl

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Two birds sit
on the golden bough
of the pippala tree.
One eats
the sweet fruit.
The other watches.
Both are happy.
One is happier.
Which?

Śvetāśvatara
Upaniṣad IV : 6

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BOOK TEN

The Complete Sauptika Parva

Preface

Karma haunts the Hindu imagination. It is not only birth after birth, but yuga after yuga, and kalpa after kalpa that inescapable nemesis pursues its guilty victim. So the makers of Purāṇa stories, and recounters of epic narratives, and the folktale versions of the Twentyfive Tales of a Vampire speak of the dark one sitting on one's back, a forever glued-on finger-pointing shadow as incorrigible as orginal and aboriginal sin.

Take the case of Aśvatthāman, who is the hero-villain-guru-mahātmā in this disturbing parva – disturbing if one wishes to avoid using the more appropriate word, harrowing. Aśvatthāman is the good man transformed into a revengeful fury, noble Hamlet become passion's monstrous slave. But Hamlet has only one life to live out; after his avenging mission, he dies also; and the rest is silence. Aśvatthāman is a *ciranjīva*, the long-liver, the forever unforgiven, the karma-punished Hindu doomed to suffer the consequences of his horrible crime for thousands of years. Indeed, a believing Hindu has only to look around himself, and he will find haunted and blighted and psychologically warped Aśvatthāman everywhere, even may be in the so-called secure cocoon of his own family. Christian guilt can be expiated; Hindu "guilt" is never forgiven, karma being what it is. If eternal hell is over-kill for mortal sin, is *ciranjīva* existence over-punishment for colossally criminal karma? Birth is heaped upon birth, says W.B. Yeats in his poem "Mohini Chatterjee", to "thunder time away." But Hindu time is Mahā-Kāla and keeps reverberating, and will not go. It's the ultimate, absolute, all-encompassing Black Hole of Kālī.

Trust Vyāsa to present us with a galaxy of *ciranjīvas* in the *Mahābhārata.* What better way to indicate the pangs of social conscience, the agenbite of private in-wit, the purifying tapasyā of penance, and the supreme,, inviolable lordship of karma? At least eight can be clearly identified:

1) Nārada. This long-haired mischievous deva-ṛṣi wanders at will, from heaven to earth to the nether-regions, strumming his *ek-tārā* guitar, asking all the "wrong" questions which one really the right questions, making grey eminences eminently uncomfortable.

2) Vibhīṣaṇa, who "betrayed" his brother Rāvaṇa and defected to Rāma.

3) Paraśurāma, the Bhargava Brahmin avatāra whose genocide of the Kṣatriyas created seven lakes of blood at Samanta-pañcaka.

4) Bali, the Daitya antigod who was overcome by Viṣṇu in his avatāra as a boar-redeemer.

5) Hanumān, who became a "long-liver" as a reward for his bhakti for Rāma and his assistance in the war against Rāvaṇa.

6) Mārkaṇḍeya, the deva-ṛṣi who lives in every yuga, inspiring distressed mortals and removing their sorrows. In the *Mahābhārata* he narrates the kathās of Śīta, Śakuntalā, Damayantī and Sāvitrī to alleviate the misery of the Paṇḍavas' exile and to suggest that all suffering can be transcended.

7) Kṛpa, grandson of Gotama, and accomplice of Aśvatthāman.

8) Aśvatthāman, of course, the perpetrator of the massacre of the Pāñcāla and Pāṇḍava children. He is doomed, says Krishna, to wander lonely and lust, angst-ridden and shunned by society, for 3000 years, unable to cleanse himself from the consequences of his cruel karma.



Kolkata
December 2007

Dedication

to
Mahā-Kāla
the presiding spirit
of the Sauptika Parva
&
of every parva
in the drama of life

नारायणं नमस्कृत्य
नरं चैव नरोत्तमम् ।
देवीं सरस्वतीं व्यासं
ततो जयमुदीरयेत् ॥

Nārāyaṇaṁ namaskṛtya
Naraṁ caiva Narottamaṁ |
Devīṁ Sarasvatīm Vyāsaṁ
tato jayaṁ udīrayet ||

INVOCATION ~

We namaskāra Nārāyaṇa!
We namaskāra Nara!
We namaskāra finest-of-men Narottama!
We namaskāra Devī Sarasvatī!
We namaskāra Vyāsa!
May victory attend us. We exclaim Jaya!

ॐ

SECTION ONE

1 The three heroes proceeded southwards
(continued Sañjaya),
and by the time evening fell,
they reached the Pāṇḍava camp.

2 Afraid of being discovered,
they freed their horses,
and took shelter
in a dense nearby forest.

3 Not too far away
from the camp
was a safe spot
where the three
weapons-lacerated heroes
rested.

4 Heaving deep sighs,
they kept thinking of the Pāṇḍavas.
They heard
the fierce reverberating cries
of victory
of the Pāṇḍavas,

5 And they panicked
and fled eastwards.
But very soon
their horses tired,
and they felt
the pangs of thirst.

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6 Anguished over the manner
rājā Duryodhana was killed,
overpowered by feelings
of anger and revenge,
the mahā-bowmen
lay low for a while.

7 "I cannot believe, Sañjaya,"
said Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"that my son Duryodhana,
who had the strength
of ten thousand elephants,
was felled by Bhīma.

8 My son had a body indestructible,
as strong as steel,
he was in the prime
of his youth,
and yet the Pāṇḍavas
succeeded in killing him.

9 O son of Gavalgaṇa!
The way all of them
butchered my son –
well, all it shows is :
fate is all powerful
and inescapable.

10 My heart must be made of stone,
Sañjaya –
a hundred sons dead,
and still
it has not shattered
into a hundred pieces!

11 What will happen
to an old son-less couple
like us?
I do not want to live
in the kingdom
of the Pāṇḍavas.

12 I was the father of a rājā,
Sañjaya,
I was a rājā myself.
And now, what am I
but a slave
of Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira?

13 I ruled the earth,
and I stood
on the heads of others.
How can I live like a slave?
Sañjaya,
must it end like this?

14 Sañjaya, do you expect me
to listen
to the words of Bhīma
who singlehanded
killed
all my hundred sons?

15 All that mahātmā Vidura
predicted
has come true, Sañjaya.
And all because
my son refused
to listen to him.

16 Sañjaya! *Tāta*! Dear Sañjaya!
Tell me: after my son Duryodhana
was killed by adharma,
what did they do –
Kṛtavarman,
Kṛpa and Aśvatthāman?"

17 O rājā! (Sañjaya replied)
Not very far away,
they stopped
near a massive forest
of clusters of trees
and thick-twiming creepers.

18 Halting briefly at the outskirts,
feeding water
to their panting horses,
it was around sunset
when they entered
that mahā-forest.

19 A forest teeming
with wild animals,
many species of birds,
a wealth of trees
and creepers,
and countless snakes.

20 An enchanting forest
of water-bodies
and colourful flowers,
hundreds upon hundreds
of pink lotuses
and countless blue lotuses.

21 In that dense forest,
soon after entering,
they saw a gigantic
nyagrodha-banyan,
a marvellous
thousand-branching tree.

22 O rājā!
Those finest of men,
those mahā-chariot-heroes
saw that that tree
was the most splendid specimen
in that forest.

23 They alighted
from their chariots,
unharnessed the horses,
and, *prabhu*-lord,
after bathing,
performed their saṁdhyā-worship.

24 The evening sun set
in the western hills,
and the world slept
in the protective arms
of the gracious
earth-mother, Night.

25 An enchanting spectacle –
the sky sprinkled
with planets and stars
like a brightly decorated
tapestry of gold
and silver embroidery.

26 And fearful creatures
who prowl in the night
ventured in the open;
and creatures
who roam in the day.
slept.

27 Creatures who prowl
in the night
began howling and wailing;
flesh-eating creatures exulted;
everywhere
was horrendous blackness.

28 In that deepening darkness,
plunged in sorrow and despair
Kṛtavarman,
Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman
and Kṛpa sat down,
sharing their grief.

29 Sitting together,
sharing their grief
under the *nyagrodha,*
they discussed
the destruction
of the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas.

30 But they were exhausted,
their bodies wracked
with sharp arrow wounds,
and they were drowsy,
so they lay on the ground
and dropped off to sleep.

31 They deserved comfort,
the two mahā-chariot-heroes
Kṛpa and Kṛtavarman,
but had to rest content
with the painful bed
of the bare ground.

32 Mahārāja! Luxurious beds
they were used to,
but now,
sorrowing and in distress,
debilitated, helpless,
they slept on the bare ground.

33 But Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman,
O Bharata Dhṛtarāṣṭra;
torn by wrath and revenge,
could not sleep.
He kept awake,
sighing like a hissing snake.

34 Sleep eluded him;
he burned with anger and pride.
Again and again,
that mahā-muscled hero
kept staring around him
at that fearful forest.

35 He could make out
various creatures of the forest;
then the mahā-muscled hero
spotted a clutch of crows
sheltering in the branches
of the *nyagrodha.*

36 Thousands of crows,
O Kaurava Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
roosting in that banyan,
each crow safe and secure
in its nest,
sleeping peacefully.

37 And then, suddenly,
without warning,
a gruesome-looking owl materialised:
he saw
the owl looming above
the sleeping crows.

38 Mahā-screeching, mahā-bodied,
black-eyed, brown-feathered,
long-beaked, sharp-taloned,
flying swiftly,
as swift as lovely-plumaged
Suparṇa-Garuḍa.

39 O Bharata Dhṛtarāṣṭra!
With shrill hoots
that egg-born creature
swooped secretly
on the crows in the branches
of the *nyagrodha*.

40 That winged creature,
that crow-killer
plunged into the branches
of the *nyagrodha*
and slaughtered
countless sleeping crows:

41 Flailing its talons
as the killing weapon,
it ripped apart
the wings of many,
sliced others' heads
and shredded their legs.

42 O lord of the earth!
Butchering instantly
any crow in its path,
that powerful owl
made the dead bodies
and mutilated limbs

43 Of its victims
shroud the branches
of the *nyagradha*-maṇḍala.
Killing all those crows
indiscriminately
provided immoderate delight

44 To that revenge-seeking,
lustfully slaying,
foe-destroying owl.
Seeing that vicious deed
of the marauding owl
that night,

45 Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
interpreted it
as an example to follow,
and thought:
"This bird teaches me
how to fight.

46 It is time for me now
to wipe out my enemies.
The Pāṇḍavas
are giddy with victory.
It is not possible for me
to defeat them now.

47 They are powerful, confident,
they have succeeded,
they are experts
in the art of retaliation.
I promised rājā Duryodhana
I would kill them all.

48 To keep that promise
I must become an insect
rushing into a fire.
If I fight fair,
I will have to die first.
No doubt of that.

49 Fight unfair –
and I will win,
and destroy my enemies.
Sure success
is always preferable
to uncertain achievement.

50 The learned in the śāstras
and even ordinary people
recommend sure success.
Many deeds which are criticised,
rejected and condemned
by the world

51 Are considered
to be the duty of those
who follow Kṣatriya-dharma.
At every step,
corrupt and cruel
and criminal deeds

52 Have been perpetrated
by this gang
of impious Pāṇḍavas.
In this matter, in the past,
verses have been chanted
by expert analysts of dharma

53 Who in their ślokas
have praised the essentials
of what constitutes justice:
'An enemy exhausted,
an enemy scattered,
or eating a meal,

54 An enemy on the move,
or entering its camp –
should be slaughtered.
An enemy sleeping
in the middle of the night,
an enemy leaderless,

55 An enemy in two minds
on what to do –
should be exterminated.'
And so it was decided to kill,
in the middle of the night,
the sleeping

56 Pāṇḍavas and Pāñcālas –
so decided by Droṇa's son,
the illustrious Aśvatthāman.
Making up his cruel mind,
and repeatedly pledging himself
to the task,

57 Aśvatthāman woke up
his maternal uncle Kṛpa
and Kṛtavarman of the Bhojas.
The two mahā-powerful mahātmās,
Kṛpa and the chief of the Bhojas,
listened

58 To Aśvatthāman.
They were so ashamed
they did not say a word.
Aśvatthāman waited,
reflected,
and said with a throbbing voice:

59 "The incomparable mahā-powerful hero,
rājā Duryodhan
was murdered –
for which reason
we vowed revenge
against the Pāṇḍavas.

60 He was the sole lord
    of eleven *akṣauhiṇīs*,
a hero of pure valour,
    and a gang of rascals,
using Bhīma as the means,
    had him slaughtered.

61 And scoundrelly wolf-waisted
    Vṛkodara-Bhīma
pressed his foot
    on an anointed king's head,
and brutally and unfairly
    killed him.

62 And the Pāñcālas
    are roaring victory cries,
and shouting and laughing,
    and blowing
hundreds of conches,
    and beating dundhubi-drums.

63 And the blare of their conches
    blends with the noise
of other musical instruments,
    and the fearsome cacophony
is carried by the wind
    to all the ten directions.

64 And the neighing of horses
    and trumpeting
of war elephants
    mingles with the mahā-noise
of warriors
    shouting their lion-roars.

65 And from the east
    comes to my ear
the horripilating joy
    of the chariot-warriors
celebrating their victory
    in their clattering vehicles.

66 In the mahā-carnage
spread by the Pāṇḍavas
in the ranks
of the son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
only the three of us
have survived.

67 Warriors as strong
as hundreds of elephants,
all-weapons-expert warriors –
killed by the Pāṇḍavas!
Who can cause such calamity
except Cosmic Time Kāla!

68 Calamity can lead only
to more calamity.
What did we not do,
what hardships not accept –
and look at the pathetic end
of all that we did!

69 If delusion has not stifled
the good sense you have,
then tell me
what is best for us
in this calamity
that has overtaken us."

SECTION TWO

1 Kṛpa replied:

"O strong-armed hero!
Radiant one!
I have listened carefully
to your every word.
Now I would like you
to listen to me.

2 Whatever men do
is the result of two forces:
Impersonal Destiny
and Personal Effort.
Apart from these two,
there is nothing else.

3 O finest of men!
Destiny by itself,
and Effort by itself,
are not enough.
The two must combine
to achieve success.

4 Good or ill, whatever happens,
happens
when these two join hands.
Look, in this world
it's these two
that make people act or not act

5 What good is rain
wasted on a mountain slope?
The same rain
in a cultivated field
brings to a farmer
a fruitful harvest.

6 Useless is Effort
without Destiny,
and Destiny without Effort.
If Destiny is missing,
whatever you do
will end up nowhere.

7 Rain will fall
when it will fall.
The field has to be ready
with mahā-fertile seed.
Human success
depends on these two.

[X:2:8-13]

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8 Destiny does not wait
for Effort to welcome it.
It comes when it comes.
The wise know
it is safer
to depend on Effort.

9 O bull-brave hero!
There is no escape.
The actions of humans
and the inactions of humans
depend on this mix
of Destiny and Effort.

10 Whatever the Effort,
success will come
when Destiny steps in.
Human Effort
bears fruit only
when Destiny is kind.

11 It does not matter
how skilful the man is.
If Destiny is not with him,
whatever he does
in this world of action
will end up as failure.

12 The lazy and the stupid
do not approve
of Effort.
Those who are wise
do not approve
of this disapproval.

13 As a rule,
work in this world
does bear fruit.
It's not-working
that brings misery.
Work is mahā-effective.

14 Rarely will you find
a human being
who succeeds without working,
or a human being
who does not get something at least
as a result of working.

15 Happy is the life
of an industrious worker,
miserable is the idler.
It's the ever-active worker
who works out
his own welfare.

16 If an active worker
does not succeed,
he is for that reason
never criticised;
achieving or not achieving,
he is respected.

17 On the other hand,
anyone succeeding
without working for it,
is generally ridiculed.
All he gets
is blame and hate.

18 And whoever disregards
all these truths
about Destiny and Effort
succeeds only
in harming himself.
So say the intelligent.

19 Destiny minus Effort,
and Effort minus Destiny –
these are the only two reasons
why human life
becomes successful
or success-less.

20 Nothing in this world
succeeds without Effort.
The man who respectfully
namaskāras Destiny,
and pursues his aims
with diligent Effort –

21 Such a man never fails
to achieve his goal.
This applies also
to anyone
who dutifully serves
the elderly,

22 Who seeks their advice
regarding his welfare,
and implements it.
Seek every day
the advice of those
who are respected by the elderly.

23 Such respectworthy men
are the root means
of succeeding in life.
Anyone who implements
such beneficial advice
of the elderly

24 Soon attains
the finest fruits of success.
Any man chasing success
through *rāga*-impulse,
through anger
and fear and greed

25 Destabilizing his mind –
will soon find his dream
totally in tatters.
Duryodhana was gripped
by avarice;
he lacked foresight.

26 He was foolish.
Spurning good advice,
he acted on impulse.
He rejected well-wishers,
and preferred the company
of mischief-makers.

27 Despite every warning,
he chose enmity
with the guṇa-blessed Pāṇḍavas.
He was wicked
from the very start.
He had no patience.

28 He ignored he advice of his friends,
and now
he is paying the bitter price.
And because we
tailed behind
that evil man,

29 This mahā-disaster
has now fallen
on our heads as well.
So terrifying
is this dilemma
that I am facing,

30 My mind is all confused,
I cannot think clearly
on what is best for us.
In such perplexity,
a man should seek
the advice of friends.

31 Respecting his intelligence and humility,
they will give him
the best advice.
With their clear thinking
they will diagnose
the root of his predicament.

32 They will give the advice
that is best for him,
which he should follow.
Let us go then
to Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and to Gāndhārī

33 And to mahā-minded Vidura,
and ask them
what we should do.
And whatever advice
they give us
for our good,

34 Let us cherish it
and implement it
implicitly.
I have decided.
My mind is firm
on this.

35 It is true, of course,
that every action
has to begin somewhere.
It is true also
that the best human effort
does not always succeed.
Who can stop Destiny
from stepping in?
There is no other way
of looking at life."

SECTION THREE

1 Mahārāja! The words of Kṛpa
(continued Sanjaya)
were filled with dharma and artha.
They filled Aśvatthāman with pain and grief.

2 Burning with intense grief,
    he steeled his mind
with cruel resolve,
    and said to Kṛpa and Kṛtavarman:

3 "People are all different,
    their views are different.
Each projects his own view.
    Each projects his view is the best,
his opinion
    the wisest.

4 Each person thinks
    he is the most intelligent.
Each thinks his view
    is the popular one,
each praises
    his own excellence.

5 Each thinks himself the cleverest,
    the most deserving
to be congratulated.
    People belittle the intelligence of others,
and think
    no end of themselves.

6 If by chance another's view
    agrees with his,
he is thrilled no end,
    and the two go about
happily flattering
    each other's intelligence.

7 But look at the way
    Kāla-yoga operates!
Time is ruthless,
    and the same two friends
start espousing
    completely opposite views.

[X:3:8-13]

Transcreated by P. Lal

8 Everywhere an amazing variety
of different people!
Different circumstances,
different consequences
different opinions,
different interpretations.

9 *Prabhu*! Lord!
Take the case of a physician.
He diagnoses, he prescribes.
Under the circumstances,
he does his best
to cure the patient.

10 Similarly, with great care,
an ordinary man,
using his intelligence,
plans for success.
Others think differently,
and find fault with him.

11 A young man is gifted
with one kind of intelligence.
The intelligence of middle age
is very different.
Very different also
the intelligence of old age.

12 O Bhoja chief!
Mahā-adversity
makes an intelligent man grieve,
and mahā-prosperity
makes that same man
exult in excess.

13 It's the same man
with the same intelligence.
In different circumstances,
his intelligence fails him.
Come adversity,
and his joy deserts him.

14 So let him use his intelligence
and make up his mind
on what he should do,
and then go and do it.
That is the only way
he is likely to succeed.

15 O chief of the Bhojas!
All men decide
'I must do this',
and then happily
they do even violent deeds
with fatal results.

16 What intelligence they have,
they do
what they think
needs to be done
which they think
will benefit them.

17 What I have decided today
in this crisis,
let me explain it
to both of you,
because I think
it will end my grief.

18 Prajāpati Brahmā
created the world
and assigned to each caste
its special karma,
on the basis of the unique guṇas
of each caste.

19 To Brahmins the supreme Vedas;
to Kṣatriyas,
all-powerful energy;
skill to the Vaisyas;
and to the Śūdras,
serving the three castes.

20 An indisciplined Brahmin
is no good;
worthless a Kṣatriya without energy;
blameworthy a Vaiśya
without skill,
blameworthy a Śūdra militant.

21 I was born
in a noble Brahmin family,
deserving the deepest pūjā-respect.
It is my misfortune
that I now practise
Kṣatriya-dharma.

22 After accepting Kṣatriya-dharma,
if I now,
for the sake of some mahā-karma,
espouse Brahmin ideals,
I will be doing something
very ignoble.

23 I wield a divine bow
and carry divine missiles.
If I do not avenge
the death of my father,
what will people
think of me?

24 Today I will follow
Kṣatriya-dharma.
I will walk in the steps
of my mahātmā father
and further the cause
of rājā Duryodhana.

25 Today the victorious Pāñcālas
are exulting;
they have removed
their armour,
and they have unharnessed
their horses

26 After celebrating victory.
They are tired out,
completely exhausted.
Tonight,
they are sunk in deep slumber
in their tents.

27 I will surprise them
and slaughter them all –
a difficult task for others.
As they sleep
senseless and unsuspecting
in their tents,

28 I will butcher them,
as Maghavat-Indra
butchered the Dānava antigods.
All of them
I will slaughter today,
along with Dhṛṣṭadyumna.

29 I will be the raging fire
that ravages a forest
or burns bales of cotton,
and wipe out the Pāñcālas.
And then, O finest of men,
I will have peace at last.

30 Today I will become
Pinākapāṇi Rudra-Śiva,
the trident-wielding deity
annihilating all creatures,
as I mercilessly massacre
the sleeping Pāñcālas.

31 And then, after slaying
all the Pāñcālas,
I shall terrorise
the Pāṇḍavas also,
who are pompously celebrating
their victory on the field.

32 And having littered
the earth with the corpses
of the Pāñcālas,
I shall at last be free
of the debt I owe
to the spirit of my father.

33 Today I will make
the Pāñcālas tread
the difficult-to-follow path
taken by Duryodhana,
Karṇa, Bhīṣma
and the Sindhu-rājā Jayadratha.

34 Tonight, with all the might
I can summon,
I will wrench the head
of the Pāñcāla-rājā Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
as I would
the head of a beast.

35 O Gautama-Kṛpa!
With my sharp sword,
tonight, I will also slice
the heads
of the sleeping sons
of the Pāñcālas and Pāṇḍavas.

36 O mahā-minded one!
Tonight is the night
I shall sleep happy,
happy at last
after doing my duty
and exterminating
the Pāñcāla ranks
sunk in the stupor of sleep."

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SECTION FOUR

Kṛpa said:
1 "O defectless one!
    Acyuta-Aśvatthāman!
Fortunate are we indeed
    that you have steeled
your mind on revenge!
    Even thunder-wielding Vajrapāṇi-Indra
cannot swerve you
    from your mission.

2 Lower your war-flag
    and remove your armour
and rest tonight.
    Tomorrow morning,
both of us
    will accompany you.

3 When you set off tomorrow
    to face your foes,
Sātvata-Kṛtavarman and I,
    clad in armour,
will accompany you
    in our chariots.

4 O finest of chariot-heroes!
    Tomorrow morning,
both of us will be
    with you on the field
when you wipe out
    the Pāñcālas and their followers.

5 *Tāta*! My dear friend!
    May you succeed
in exterminating your foes!
    You have not slept for many days.
Sleep well tonight.
    You are utterly exhausted.

6 O bestower of honour!
Sleep, and refresh yourself.
Tomorrow, with a clear mind,
you will go
and wipe out your foes.
No doubt of that.

7 Among chariot-warriors
you are the finest.
You wield splendid weapons.
Even the lord-god Vāsava-Indra
cannot surpass you
in battle.

8 When, protected by Kṛtavarman,
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
angrily proceeds to battle,
with I, Kṛpa, at his side,
even the rājā-of-the-gods Indra
cannot defeat him.

9 Let us therefore
take rest tonight and sleep.
Tiredness gone,
refreshed by sleep,
let us proceed and destroy
all our enemies.

10 This much is certain –
you and I possess
divinely powerful missiles,
and Sātvata-Kṛtavarman
is a mahā-bowman,
an absolute expert in warfare.

11 *Tāta*! My dear friend!
What pure pleasure
will it be for us
to go to battle together
and exterminate our foes
on the field!

12 So, forget your fears
and sleep off this night.
Tomorrow, in the morning,
I and Kṛtavarman
will accompany
the incomparable hero

13 That you are.
He and I are scorchers of enemies,
and we will come armed with bows,
and ride in our chariots
alongside
the chariot-hero Aśvatthāman.

14 And together
we will infiltrate their tents,
announce our presence,
and you can then
terrorise
your unsuspecting enemies.

15 Like Śakra-Indra himself
slaughtering mahā-antigods,
tomorrow morning,
in the cool of the day,
eliminate your enemies
at your pleasure.

16 Like enraged Dānava-slayer Indra
defeating
the army of the Daityas,
you are competent
to attack and wipe out
the ranks of the Pāñcālas.

17 With me on your side,
and Kṛtavarman
also protecting you,
even thunder-wielding
Vajrapāṇi-Indra
dare not face you.

18 *Tāta*! My dear friend!
I and Kṛtavarman
will not return
from the battlefield
without finishing off
the Pāṇḍavas.

19 We promise to kill
the angry Pāñcālas and Pāṇḍavas,
all of them;
either that,
or we die in the attempt,
and attain heaven.

20 O defectless one!
O mahā-muscled hero!
Tomorrow morning,
in every way,
we are with you.
I give you my word."

21 O rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra!
These well-meaning words
of his maternal uncle
infuriated Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman.
Eyes livid
with rage, he said:

22 "Can a grief-ridden man sleep?
Or one who's angry?
Or one who's busy planning success?
Or one caught,
in the clutches of kāma?
Look, I am all these four.

23 Any one of these four causes
can destroy your sleep.
Name me one grief
in this world
greater than the grief of one
who mourns a slain father.

24 Day and night I burn
in the fire of that grief.
I know no peace
in my heart.
You saw the way these criminals
murdered my father.

25 I feel the cutting pain
in the very marrow of my flesh.
A wonder
that I continue
to survive in this world;
I do not know how.

26 'Droṇa has been killed
by Dhṛṣṭadyumna' –
these words of the Pāñcālas
ring in my ears.
How can I continue to live
without killing Dhṛṣṭadyumna?

27 Dhṛṣṭadyumna I will kill,
and the murdering
Pāñcāla accomplices as well.
And rājā Duryodhana,
his thigh broken, groaning in pain –
who can hear

28 His agony, and not feel
the pain consume
the core of his heart?
Who is so pitiless
that tears will not well up
in his eyes

29 Listening to the story
of the helpless
broken-thighed king?
That my friends
should be crushed like this
in front of my eyes

30 Is sorrow that swells
and sweeps over me
like a rolling tidal wave.
My single madness!
How can I sleep?
Where is my happiness?

31 O excellent hero!
Because they are protected
by Vāsudeva-Krishna and Arjuna,
the Pāṇḍavas, I think,
are as invulnerable
as Mahendra-Indra.

32 I cannot control
my furious anger.
I do not see anyone
in this world
who has the power now
to restrain me.

33 I have made up my mind.
I know what is best for me now.
When runners
turn up and tell me
that all my friends
have been defeated

34 And the Pāṇḍavas victorious,
my heart burns.
I will kill my sleeping foes today,
and then only will I rest,
and sleep
a peaceful sleep."

SECTION FIVE

1 Kṛpa said:
"If you ask me,
an ill-thinking person
who does not control his senses
can listen to dharma and artha,
but will not be able to grasp
their true meaning.

2 A very learned man too –
no matter how profound
his learning,
if he lacks humility,
he will never grasp
the true meaning
of what is dharma
and what is artha.

3 Even the most valiant warrior,
no matter how long
he listens to a pāṇḍit,
will never grasp dharma,
if dull-witted.
No spoon knows the taste of soup.

4 It's the tongue that relishes
the taste of soup.
It's the intelligent man
who knows what dharma is,
even after the briefest contact
with a pāṇḍit.

5 The intelligent person
who controls his senses,
listens attentively and soon
picks up moral values,
and never rejects
what deserves to be accepted.

6 But there are wicked ones too,
ill-ātmaned people
who refuse the straight path;
they reject the beneficial,
and prefer a career
of multiple misdeeds.

7 Well-meaning friends succeed
in dissuading
an ill-doer from misbehaviour;
lucky the ill-doer who listens,
unlucky the one
who is stubborn.

8 It's like trying to persuade
a madman to refrain
from misbehaviour.
Who listens to good friends, prospers;
who will not listen,
ruins his life.

9 That is how learned friends
do their best
to dissuade an intelligent friend
from misbehaviour,
repeatedly instructing
and warning him.

10 *Tāta*! My dear friend!
Use your ātman
to get a grip on your ātman
for your own welfare.
Listen to me –
and not repent later.

11 In this world of ours,
dharma does not sanction
killing a sleeping enemy,
a person who has laid down
his weapons,
a person unhorsed or unchırioted,

12 A person who says,
'I am yours',
a person who surrenders,
a person whose hair is untied,
a person
whose vehicle is damaged.

13 O radiant hero!
The Pāñcālas have removed
their coats of mail,
and are fast asleep,
dead asleep,
like lifeless bodies.

14 Any savage perpetrator
of a crime
against them now
will surely plummet
to the worst and the lowest
unredeemable hell.

15 Of this world's arms-wielders,
you are the best.
Your fame has spread
the world over.
No one has found
any fault in you.

16 Wake up at sunrise tomorrow,
and dazzle the world
with the brilliance of the sun!
Fight your battle in the open,
and destroy
all your enemies.

17 How can you ever think
of such an ignoble plan?
If you ask me,
it will stain you
like a red blot
on a pure white sheet."

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18 “My dear maternal uncle,”
replied Aśvatthāman,
“what you say is true.
But it’s they who first
shattered the moral code
into a hundred fragments.

19 Was it not Dhṛṣṭadyumna
who, in front of all the kings
and, indeed,
in front of you,
murdered my father
who had laid down his weapons?

20 Was it not Gāṇḍīva-wielding
Gāṇḍīva-dhanvanā Arjuna
who murdered Karṇa
when Karṇa’s chariot-wheel
was helplessly bogged
in the battlefield?

21 And was it not Gāṇḍīva-
wielding Arjuna again
who used Śikhaṇḍin
as a shield,
and murdered weapon-less
Śāntanu’s son Bhīṣma?

22 And what about Bhūriśravas
the mahā-bowman
who took the *prāya*-vow?
Despite the protests
of the kings, was he not killed
by Yuyudhāna-Sātyaki?

23 And was it not Bhīma
who, in a deed
of utter adharma,
smashed the thighs of Duryodhana
in the presence
of the witnessing kings?

24 Tiger-among-men Duryodhana
was all alone,
surrounded by so many
mahā-chariot-heroes
when Bhīma perpetrated
his deed of adharma.

25 The marrow in my bones
curdles with horror
when I recall the agony
of rājā Duryodhana
from the reports brought
by the runners.

26 Criminals! Rascals of adharma,
all of them!
The Pāñcālas equally guilty!
What prevents you
from condemning these violators
of the moral code?

27 Let me be a worm,
an insect in my next birth –
I do not care!
I am going to kill
the sleeping Pāñcālas
who murdered my father.

28 I have made up my mind,
and this urges me
to do quickly
what must be done.
In this desperate hurry,
how can I sleep in peace?

29 No one in this world now,
and no one
in this world ever,
can stop me
from wiping out
the Pāñcālas."

30 Mahārāja! (said Sañjaya)
With these words,
Droṇa's illustrious son Aśvatthāman
quietly yoked the horses
to his chariot, and drove off
towards his enemies.

31 Just before he left,
Bhoja-Kṛtavarman and Śāradvat-Kṛpa,
both mahātmā heroes,
said: "Why are you yoking the horses,
Aśvatthāman?
What are you planning?

32 O bull-brave hero!
Both of us are here to help you.
We are with you
in joy, in sorrow.
There is no reason for you
to distrust us."

33 But Aśvatthāman was aflame
with anger
brooding on death of his father.
Speaking bitterly,
he told them clearly
what he had in mind.

34 "After killing
hundreds of thousands of warriors,
my father laid down
his weapons.
That was when
Dhṛṣṭadyumna murdered him.

35 And I have determined
that I will kill
the criminal sons
of the Pāñcāla rājā
with the same disregard
for dharma.

36 I will see to it
that Dhṛṣṭadyumna is slaughtered
like a beast.
He will not attain the realm
reserved for those who perish
weapons in hand.

37 Both of you are magnificent
foe-crushing chariot-heroes.
Fasten your armours,
buckle your swords,
brandish your bows,
and wait for me here."

38 O rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra!
Saying this,
Aśvatthāman sped towards his enemies.
Sātvata-Kṛtavarman
and Kṛpa
followed him.

39 The three of them
looked like
three blazing sacred fires
of a yajña,
fed with libations
of clarified butter.

40 O radiant lord Dhṛtarāṣṭra!
They arrived at the tents
where their enemies
were sleeping.
The mahā-chariot-hero
Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman
stationed himself
outside the entrance.

[X:6:1-6]

SECTION SIX

1 "Sañjaya," said Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"seeing Aśvatthāman, angry,
at the entrance, what did Kṛpa
and Kṛtavarman do?"

2 He stood there (replied Sañjaya)
at the tent's entrance
and beckoned to Kṛtavarman
and the mahā-chariot-hero Kṛpa.

3 There he saw the creature:
a mahā-bodied beast
guarding the entrance;
dazzling with the radiance
of the moon and the sun –
a horripilating apparition.

4 Covering his loins
was a blood-smeared tiger-skin;
around his chest
was a black deerskin;
his *yajñopavita* sacred thread
was a nāga-serpent.

5 His huge long arms carried
a variety of weapons;
a mahā-serpent
was his *aṅgada* arm-bracelet;
his face was a mass
of flickering flames.

6 Horrendous teeth
in a gaping and fearful mouth;
thousands of weirdly beautiful eyes
studded his face,
adorning that body
of awesome proportions.

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7 No words can describe
that body, that attire.
Were a mountain somehow
to see this creature,
it would shatter
and split in terror.

8 Fire! Licking, flapping,
flickering flames
issued from his mouth,
his nostrils, his ears,
and his thousands upon thousands
of eyes.

9 From that blazing incandescence
issued hundreds of thousands
of Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishnas,
each
with its own conch
and cakra and mace.

10 Far from being terrorised
by that incredible
world-fearful form,
Aśvatthāman calmly
deluged it
with his celestial missiles.

11 Like the *vaḍavā* subterranean
fire consuming
the waters of the ocean,
that mahā-apparition
devoured the arrows
of Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman.

12 Seeing all his arrows
harmlessly swallowed
by that creature,
all rendered futile,
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
readied and aimed

[X:6:13-18]

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13 A *ratha-śakti* missile
that blazed
like a long tongue of flame.
Striking the creature,
the fiery tip of the
ratha-śakti exploded

14 And scattered and collapsed
like mahā-meteors
plunging into the sun
at the end of a yuga.
Then was the gold-handled
celestial sky-blue sword

15 Unsheathed by Aśvatthāman,
like a flaming serpent
emerging from its hole.
Percipient Aśvatthāman
hurled the sword
at the awesome creature.

16 The sword sped straight
and struck, but vanished
like a mongoose scuttling
inside a hole. Lifting
his Indra-war-flag glorious mace,
Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman

17 Flung that dazzling weapon
at the creature,
who instantly devoured it.
One by one,
all his weapons frustrated,
he looked around him.

18 The entire *ākāśa*-space
was filled
with countless Janārdana-Krishnas.
Awed by this spectacle,
the son of Droṇa,
weaponless Aśvatthāman

19 Recalled the words of Kṛpa
    and, dismayed and smarting
with failure, thought:
    "The man who refuses
to follow the advice
    of well-meaning friends

20 Suffers exactly
    as I have suffered
by disregarding my friends.
    And he who spurns the śāstras,
and chooses
    violence and bloodshed,

21 Swerves from the path
    of dharma, and succeeds
in destroying only himself.
    Cow, Brahmin, king, woman,
loved-and-loving *sakhā*-friend,
    mother, guru,

22 A helpless person, a mentally handicapped,
    a blind man,
anyone asleep, or terror-stricken,
    or just woken, a drunk,
a madman, one unprepared –
    are not targets for weapons.

23 This is the lesson a guru
    has always taught
from the ancient past.
    But I bypassed
this eternal path
    of the śāstras;

24 I took the wrong path,
    and I have created
my own disaster.
    Those who have insight
say no greater calamity
    can fall on a person

25 Than that, out of fear,
he shrink back
from accomplishing
a magnificent mission.
He puts in all his strength,
and then gives up.

26 Well, human effort
is never as effective
as the power of destiny.
If destiny fails
to support the struggle
of human effort,

27 A man is bound to stray
from the path of dharma,
and so face calamity.
Those who have insight
describe the unsuccessful man
as foolish

28 If, after embarking on a mission,
out of fear
he decides to give up.
Knowing it was wicked,
I chose to do this,
and now I am afraid.

29 It can never be
that the son of Droṇa
will flinch from his purpose.
But this mahā-apparition,
this *daiva-daṇḍa* dreadful destiny
stands in my way.

30 Try as I might,
I cannot make out
who he is. He must be
a projection
of the adharma
that I am pursuing.

31 He is the fearful fruit
of my decision
to fulfil my mission.
He is destiny
threatening me
to abandon my decision.

32 Without the help of destiny,
no human effort
can hope to succeed.
I will take shelter
in the blessing
of Mahādeva-Śiva.

33 He will appear before me,
he will neutralise
this horrendous apparition,
this *daiva-daṇḍa,*
this dreadful destiny.
Kapardin-Śiva!
Ascetic Śiva!
Deva-deva-Śiva! God-of-gods Śiva!
Umā-pati Śiva! Umā's consort Śiva!

34 Kapāla-mālinaṁ
Skull-garlanded Śiva!
Rudra-Śiva! Hara-Śiva!
Bhaganetra-haraṁ
Plucker-of-the-eyes-of-Bhaga-Śiva!
Surpasser-of-all-the-gods-in-tapasyā Śiva!
I seek the shelter of Giriśa-Śiva!
I seek the blessing of Śiva,
of the Trident-Wielder Śūlapāṇi!"

SECTION SEVEN

1 O lord of the earth! (said Sañjaya)
Thinking thus,
Droṇa's son descended from the chariot-seat
and sang in praise of Deveśa-Śiva:

2 "Ugra! Sthāṇu! Śiva! Rudra!
Śarva! Īśāna! Īśvara!
Girīśa! Varada! Deva!
Bhava-bhāvana-īśvara!
Lord of mountains! Granter of boons!
Creator and Lord of the universe!

3 Śitikaṇṭha! Aja! Śukra!
Dakṣakratu-hara! Hara!
Viśvarūpa! Virūpākṣa!
Bahurūpa! Umā-pati!
Blue-Throated! Birthless! Pure! Destroyer
of Dakṣa's yajña! World-formed! Three-eyed!

4 Śmaśāna-vāsina! Dṛpta!
Mahā-gaṇa-pati! Vibhu!
Khaṭvāṅga-dhāriṇa! Rudra!
Jaṭila! Brahmacāriṇa!
Cremation ground dweller! Energy-reservoir!
Lord of spirits! Matted haired skull-clubbed one!

5 Manasā su-viśuddhena
duṣkareṇa-alpacetasā!
so-aham-ātmopahāreṇa
yakṣye tripura-ghātina!
Little-minded I, purifying the difficult-
to-purify mind, I offer myself
to the Tripura-destroyer.

6 Who has been praised,
who will be praised,
who is now being praised,
who never fails, wears tiger-skin,
is red-haired, blue-throated,
powerful, irresistible;

7 Śukra, viśva-sṛja, brahma,
brahmacāriṇa,
vratavanta, taponitya,
ananta, tapatā, gati!
Pure, World-Creator, Brahmā, Brahmacāri,
Firm-vowed, Tapasyā-practiser, Infinite Goal!

8 Bahu-rūpa, gaṇādhyakṣa,
tryakṣa, pariṣada-priya,
dhanādhyakṣe-kṣitamukha.
gauri-hṛdaya-vallabha!
Multi-formed, Lord of spirits, Three-eyed,
Fond of friends, Admired by Kubera, Beloved of Gaurī.

9 Father of Kumāra-Kārtikeya!
Dark red-complexioned deity!
Bull-rider! Fine robe-wearer!
O Awesome Deity!
Always ready to adorn
your consort Umā!

10 Paraṁ parebhyaḥ paramaṁ
paraṁ yasmān na vidyate!
O Deity than whom
there is none higher anywhere!
O weapons-wielder! O Illimitable!
Protector of all territories!

11 O Deity clad in golden armour!
O Deity ornamented
with the moon on your brow!
With all my heart,
with all my mind,
I seek your shelter.

12 If today I succeed
in my terrible trial,
so difficult to overcome,
O purest of the pure,
I will place my five-element body
as homage before you."

13 This was the determined decision
of mahātmā Aśvatthāman
to accomplish his mission.
A golden *vedī*-altar
suddenly materialised
before Droṇa's son.

14 O rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra!
The fire god Citrabhānu appeared,
and his radiance
filled the directions
and the sub-directions
and the entire sky.

15 With flaming mouths and eyes,
multi-footed
and headed and armed,
wearing gem-encrusted
aṅgada-arm ornaments,
with arms uplifted,

16 Looking like tall flaming hills,
there appeared
hosts of mahā-creatures,
with bodies of dogs, pigs, and camels,
and faces of horses,
jackals and cows.

17 Some had the faces of bears,
cats, tigers and cheetahs;
others were crow-faced,
and even monkey-faced;
still others were faced
like parrots

18 And mahā-serpents
and *haṁsa*-swans.
O Bharata Dhṛtarāṣṭra!
A wondrous spectacle!
Woodpecker faces too,
and blue jays.

19 There were tortoises too,
and crocodiles and dolphins,
and mahā-*makara* monsters
of the ocean,
and others with faces
of *timi*-fishes,

20 And peacocks, *krauñca*-cranes
pigeons and elephants.
Still others had faces
that resembled those
of water-birds
like the *pārāvata* and *madgu.*

21 Some had ears sprouting
from their hands;
some were thousand-eyed
and long-bellied.
Some, O Bharata descendant,
were mere skeletons.

22 O Bharata Dhṛtarāṣṭra!
O rājā!
Some had no heads,
some were bear-faced.
Flaming eyes, fire-spitting tongues,
blazing bodies.

23 O Indra-among-rājās!
Their head-hair too was flaming,
and their bodies.
Some had four arms,
O king,
and faces of sheep and goats.

24 Some were conch-faced,
conch-complexioned
and conch-eared;
they wore conch-garlands,
and when they spoke,
they blared like conches.

25 Some had a single tuft,
some were five-tufted,
some were totally bald.
Some were thin-stomached,
four-toothed and tongued,
arrow-eared, diadem-topped.

26 O Indra-among-rājās!
Some wore grass skirts,
some had curly hair.
Some were turbanned, others crowned;
some were handsome,
some heavily ornamented.

27 Some crowned their heads
with lotuses,
others with lilies.
A magnificent procession
of hundreds of thousands
of such creatures.

28 O Bharata descendant!
Some were armed
with *śataghni*-firearms,
thunderbolts, clubs,
bhuśuṇḍi-weapons,
nooses and rods.

29 On their backs were quivers.
Armed with arrows,
they seemed to be thirsting
for battle.
They carried war-flags and pennants,
bells and battle-axes.

30 They displayed mahā-nooses
in uplifted arms,
and sticks and poles and swords;
and some
had snakes with raised hoods
as their head-dress.

31 Some had mahā-serpents
serving as *aṅgadas* on their arms;
some were dust-smeared,
some were filthy;
all, however, were dressed
in white robes.

32 Some were blue-skinned,
others dark red,
some were shaven clean.
Bheri-drums, conches,
mṛdaṅgas, *jharjharas*,
anakas and *go-mukhas*

33 Were joyfully played
by golden-complexioned
pāriṣada-companions
who sang
and danced merrily
to the music:

34 That gang of celebrating
mahā-chariot-heroes
leapt and jumped sideways
and somersaulted,
bounding passionately,
their hair all dishevelled.

35 They screamed and trumpeted
like musth elephants.
Fearful and awesome
to look at were they,
brandishing *śūla*-lances
and paṭṭiśa-hatchets.

36 Multi-coloured their dresses,
beautiful their garlands,
fragrant their unguents,
uplifted their arms
decorated with gem-studded
aṅgada-bracelets,

37 Cruel killers of enemies were they,
courageous and puissant,
irresistible,
drinkers of blood and fat,
flesh-gorgers
and entrail-gobblers.

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38 Some had single hair tufts,
some wore *karṇikāra*-flowers,
some were wild with joy,
some had cauldron-huge stomachs;
some short,
fat, tall, fierce.

39 Some had deformed features,
some had lips
hanging flabby and loose,
and huge penises and testicles.
Some had diadems,
some were bald, some matted-haired.

40 They had the power to bring
sun, moon, stars and sky
down on earth,
and also the power
to abliterate the four kinds
of created life.

41 Absolutely fearless,
they swore by the furrowed brow
of Hara-Śiva.
They did as they liked,
they were the lords of the lords
of the three worlds.

42 Lords of Vāk the goddess of speech,
they were always
in high spirits.
Envying none, hating none,
they took no pride in their mastery
of the eight divine guṇas.

43 Even Bhagavān Hara-Śiva
marvelled daily
at their wondrous feats.
In thought, speech and deed
they offered eternal adoration
to Śiva.

44 Because of their bhakti
in thought, speech and deed,
Śiva regarded them
as his own children.
They angrily drank the blood
and fat of all Brahmā-haters.

45 Drinking the fourfold *soma* –
anna-food, *soma*-juice,
amṛta-nectar, moon-maṇḍala –
and studying śruti-scriptures,
practising brahmacarya, tapasyā
and control of the senses,

46 They offered their adoration
to trident-symbolled Śiva
and obtained Bhava-Śiva's grace.
As the ātman-self
of Bhagavān Maheśvara-Śiva,
who, with Pārvatī,

47 Is lord of past, present and future,
these hosts
of mahā-creatures enjoy
and are one with his glory.
Playing music, laughing,
challenging, roaring,

48 Terrorising the world,
these companions of Śiva
approached Aśvatthāman.
Praising Mahādeva-Śiva they came,
spreading radiance
all around them.

49 They were eager to know
about the glorious energy
of mahātmā Aśvatthāman,
and wished to witness
the impending slaughter
of his sleeping enemies.

50 They wanted to enhance
his glory as well,
so they came from all sides,
armed with fierce-looking spears,
battle-axes, maces
and flaming brands.

51 A spectacle terrifying enough
to spread panic
in the three worlds,
yet mahā-powerful Aśvatthāman
was in no way
disturbed by it.

52 Holding his bow,
his fingers encased
in iguana-skin protectors,
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
offered his whole ātman-self
as sacrifice to Śiva.

53 O Bharata descendant!
In that self-offering,
his bow was the *samidha*-fuel,
his sharp arrows
the *pavitra*-ladles,
his ātman the libation.

54 Mahā-enraged and valiant
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
offered his ātman-self
with this soma-mantra:
आप्यायस्व समेतु ते विश्वतः
सोम वृष्ण्यम् । भवा वाजस्य संगथे ।

55 Having praised Rudra-Śiva
of fierce karma
with this fierce ritual,
he said to mahātmā Śiva
with palms joined
in *prāñjali*:

56 "*Bhagavan!* Revered deity!
Born from Aṅgirasa,
I offer my ātman-self
to you as sacrifice.
Be so gracious
as to accept this offering.

57 Viśvātman! Ātman of the universe!
O Mahādeva-Śiva!
In my hour of crisis,
with single-minded bhakti
I place before you
this offering of myself.

58 All the world's creatures
are in you,
and you are
in all the world's creatures.
The world's greatest guṇas
are embodied in you.

59 O radiant deity!
You are the refuge
of all the world's creatures.
If I cannot destroy my enemies,
then accept me
as the sacrifice."

60 With these words,
Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman ascended
the blazing *vedī*-altar,
offered himself as sacrifice,
and entered
the flickering flames.

61 Bhagavān Mahādeva-Śiva
appeared in person,
and seeing Aśvatthāman
seated as sacrifice
with uplifted arms,
he smiled and said:

62 "With truth, purity, simplicity,
renunciation, tapasyā,
strict rules, forebearance,
bhakti, patience,
clear thinking,
and speech

63 Have I been worshipped
by Krishna
of blameless karma.
There is no one
dearer to me
than Krishna.

64 *Tāta*! Dear one!
To honour Krishna,
and to test you,
I have protected the Pāñcālas,
and repeatedly
resorted to māyā.

65 I honoured Krishna
who protected the Pāñcālas.
But Kala has run out for them;
their time is over;
they have reached
the end of their life."

66 Saying this, Bhagavān Śiva
entered the ātman-self
of mahātmā Aśvatthāman,
and presented him
an incomparable
glittering sword.

67 Suffused by Bhagavān Śiva,
Aśvatthāman blazed
with an incredible radiance.
The deity's energy
inspired him to do swift
and sure battle.

68 And as he advanced
to the tents of his foes,
like Lord Śiva himself,
he was followed by hordes
of invisible creatures
and rākṣasas.

SECTION EIGHT

1 "When mahā-chariot-hero Aśvatthāman
advanced towards the tent,"
asked Dhṛtarāṣṭra, "did Kṛtavarman
and Kṛpa retreat in fear?

2 Did any of these savage guards
try to stop them?
Did those two mahā-chariot-heroes
find their mission too difficult?

3 Sañjaya, did Aśvatthāman succeed
in keeping his promise
and killing the Somakas and Pāṇḍavas
in their tents that night?
Or did he too perish
like Duryodhana in battle?

4 Did the Pāñcālas succeed
in killing them,
to sleep forever on the earth?
Did the two perform
any remarkable feat?
Tell me all, Sañjaya."

5 When the son of Droṇa,
mahātmā Aśvatthāman
advanced towards the entrance
(Sañjaya said),
Kṛpa and Kṛtavarman
met him there.

6 Seeing those two mahā-chariot-heroes,
O rājā,
armed and ready,
Aśvatthāman was overjoyed.
Cautiously he whispered
to them:

7 "If you with to do so,
you are able enough
to exterminate
the entire Kṣatriya race.
Killing these sleeping survivors
is easy work.

8 I will enter the tent
and ravage it
like Kāla on a rampage.
You must see to it
that not a single mortal
escapes with his life

9 And slips past you
outside the entrance.
I want your word on this."
Saying this
Aśvatthāman entered the mahā-tent
of the Pāṇḍavas,

10 Making his way in
through a door-less entrance.
He leapt inside,
without any fear.
That mahā-muscled hero
knew exactly what to do,

11 And very carefully proceeded
to the quarters
of Dhṛṣṭadyumna.
Utterly exhausted
by displays of his mahā-feats
on the battlefield,

12 Dhṛṣṭadyumna was fast asleep,
surrounded
by his fellow-warriors.
O Bharata descendant!
As he set foot in the quarters
of Dhṛṣṭadyumna,

13 Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman noticed
he was sleeping
in a luxurious bed
adorned with silk sheets,
flowers, sandalpaste
and aromatic incense.

14 The room was fragrant
with scented garlands
and smoky wisps of perfume.
With cool deliberation
and complete fearlessness,
mahātmā Dhṛṣṭadyumna

15 Was roused from his slumber,
O lord of the earth,
by a kick from Aśvatthāman.
Jolted awake
by the impact of the foot,
fearless-in-battle,

16 Immeasurably-noble-ātmaned
Dhṛṣṭadyumna
recognised the mahā-chariot-hero
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman.
He struggled to get up.
Mahā-powerful Aśvatthāman

17 Seized his hair with both hands,
hurled him down
and started pummelling him.
Flung on the ground
with brutal force,
O Bharata Dhṛtarāṣṭra,

18 The Pāñcāla leader,
drowsy with sleep, numb with fear,
could do nothing.
O rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra!
Pinioning his chest and neck
with his feet,

19 Aśvatthāman trampled him
as he would an animal.
He writhed. He screamed.
He scratched Aśvatthāman
with his nails,
and moaned indistinctly:

20 "O ācārya's son!
No more! Kill me quickly
with a weapon!
Send me at least
to the auspicious realm
of the weapons-slain!"

21 Suffocated
by his powerful foe,
those were the last words
of the foe-crushing
Pāñcāla prince
Dhṛṣṭadyumna.

22 To his indistinct plea,
Droṇa's son replied:
"You shame of your family!
There is no auspicious realm
for the murderer
of an ācārya!

23 Wicked-minded scoundrel!
You do not deserve death
by a weapon!"
With these words to the hero,
like a lion pouncing
on a musth elephant,

24 Aśvatthāman pressed his heels
to strike
at Dhṛṣṭadyumna's vital parts.
The dying screams
of the Pāñcāla hero
Dhṛṣṭadyumna,

25 O mahārāja Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
woke the ladies
and the guards in the tent.
They saw
the valiant superhuman creature
attacking Dhṛṣṭadyumna,

26 And they thought
it was a monstrous ghost,
and fear struck them dumb.
This was the way
Dhṛṣṭadyumna was despatched
to the abode of Yama.

27 O rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra!
Aśvatthāman emerged
from the tent,
climbed into his beautiful chariot
and drowned the directions
with his reverberating roars

28 As he proceeded
from tent to tent,
wreaking fatal destruction.
With the departure
of the mahā-chariot-hero
son of Droṇa,

29 The ladies and the guards
of the tent
burst into wails of agony.
And profound despair
at the death
of their brave rājā

[X:8:30-35]

30 Dhṛṣṭadyumna overcame
his Kṣatriya warriors,
O Bharata Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
The wails of the women
prompted many bull-brave
Kṣatriya heroes

31 To quickly put on their armour.
They readied themselves,
asking, "What happened?"
Still traumatised, O rājā,
by Bhāradvāja-Aśvatthāman,
the ladies

32 Said, in piteous choking appeal,
"Quick! Follow him!
Quick! Follow him!
We do not know
if it is a rākṣasa
or a human.

33 He's killed the Pāñcāla rājā!
There he is –
in that chariot!"
The excellent warriors
rushed out
and surrounded Aśvatthāman,

34 But he exterminated
every single one of them
with his Rudra-missile.
Slaughtering Dhṛṣṭadyumna
and his scores
of dedicated followers,

35 Aśvatthāman drove
to a nearby tent
where Uttamaujas was sleeping.
Pinioning Uttamaujas's
chest and neck
with his feet,

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36 He slew his foe-crushing wailing victim
exactly
as he had killed Dhṛṣṭadyumna.
In the belief
that a rākṣasa had killed Uttamaujas,
Yudhāmanyu swiftly

37 Advanced with a mace,
aiming it at
Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman's chest.
Aśvatthāman seized him
and dashed him violently
on the ground.

38 He struggled, but Aśvatthāman
slew him too
as he would an animal.
After butchering
heroic Yudhāmanyu,
Aśvatthāman targeted

39 Many other sleeping
mahā-chariot-heroes.
O Indra-among-rājās
they writhed, they trembled,
but he slew them like animals
at a *śamitā* sacrifice.

40 Brilliant swordsman Aśvatthāman
drove from tent
to tent, one by one
methodically targeting
and slaying the heroes
in their sleep.

41 Weaponless and exhausted,
the sleeping
gulma-guards also
became victims
as soon as Aśvatthāman
chanced upon them.

42 With his sword he cut down
warriors, horses and elephants.
Blood-drenched,
he was like Antaka-Yama,
the god of death,
commissioned by doomsday Kāla.

43 Blood splattered all over him –
blood from sliced
wriggling bodies, blood from
pulled-out sword
from corpses, blood from
the hurled sword.

44 He was a swaying sword,
a glittering mass
of blood. His body
was like that
of a fearful
inhuman creature.

45 O Kaurava descendant!
All who were awake
were bewildered
by the utter confusion,
they stared at each other
and at Aśvatthāman.

46 All those foe-exterminating
Kṣatriyas saw
the fearful form
of Aśvatthāman,
and thought him a rākṣasa
and closed their eyes.

47 Like doom-dispensing Kāla,
horrendous Aśvatthāman
swept through the tents.
He came upon
the sons of Draupadī
and the Somaka survivors.

48 O lord of the earth!
Terrified by the commotion,
and hearing that Dhṛṣṭadyumna
had been killed,
Draupadī's five sons advanced
with their bows.

49 Casting off their fear,
they deluged Bhāradvāja-
Aśvatthāman with volleys
of arrows.
The tumultuous noise
woke the Prabhadrakas.

50 Led by Śikhaṇḍin
they also attacked
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman.
Bhāradvāja-Aśvatthāman.
saw them shooting
showers of arrows,

51 And roared his challenge
to kill all
those mahā-chariot-heroes.
Stirred to wrath
by the memory
of his father's death,

52 He alighted from his chariot
and brandishing
his glittering shield
studded with a thousand
moon-symbols,
he rushed forward

53 With his gold-ornamented,
divine, shining sword
to fight his foes.
That powerful hero
began slashing right and left
at Draupadī's sons.

54 In that mahā-encounter,
that tiger-among-men
plunged his sword, O rājā,
in the stomach
of Prativindhya,
who collapsed and died.

55 Illustrious Sutasoma
wounded Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman
with a lance,
and then
rushed at him
with an uplifted sword.

56 O bull-brave Bharata!
Aśvatthāman sliced
the sword-wielding arm,
and pierced the chest
of Sutasoma, who died instantly,
chest ripped open.

57 Nakula's son Śatānīka
lifted a chariot-wheel
with both hands
and rushed to hurl it
at the chest
of Aśvatthāman.

58 He flung the wheel. It missed.
Aśvatthāman the twice-born
retaliated with ferocity.
Wounded, Śatānīka fell
on the ground.
Aśvatthāman cut off his head.

59 Attacking with a *parigha*
spiked club,
Śrutakarman advanced
and wounded
the shield-holding left arm
of Droṇa's son.

60 Aśvatthāman slashed
the face of Śrutakarman
with his sharp shining sword.
Horribly disfigured,
Śrutakarman lost consciousness
and fell on the field.

61 In the noise and confusion,
the mahā-chariot-hero Śrutakīrti
confronted Aśvatthāman,
assailing him
with countless
showers of arrows.

62 Blocking the arrows
with his shield,
Aśvatthāman sliced
the handsome
ear-ringed head
of Śrutakīrti.

63 Next to attack,
assisted by all the Prabhadrakas,
was the slayer-of-Bhīṣma,
valiant Śikhaṇḍin,
who assailed Aśvatthāman
with a variety of weapons,

64 And with a special arrow
he wounded Aśvatthāman
between the eyebrows.
Mahā-powerful Aśvatthāman,
in a fit
of raging anger,

65 Severed Śikhaṇḍin
in two
with his sword.
This was how Śikhaṇḍin
was killed by foe-crushing,
enraged Aśvatthāman.

66 Then he launched
a fierce attack
on the Prabhadrakas,
followed by an assault
on the survivors
of Virāṭa's army.

67 Mahā-powerful Aśvatthāman
searched out, one by one,
Drupada's sons, grandsons,
and well-wishers,
and systematically
slaughtered them.

68 Superbly skilled swordsman
Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman
attacked many other warriors
as well,
and cut them to pieces
with his sharp weapon.

69 The goddess Kālī herself!
Blood-red eyes,
blood-red garlands,
blood-red unguents,
blood-red dress, noose in hand,
blood relative,

70 The soldiers saw her!
Kāla-rātri Doomsday Night!
Standing there, singing a song,
with her grisly noose
strangling men and horses
and elephants.

71 Tying *preta*-spirits in her noose,
O rājā, and spiriting them away,
bereft of hair,
and spiriting away also
the weaponless
mahā-chariot-heroes

72 As they slept,
and visioned in their sleep,
O respectworthy monarch,
the Nightmare Death
and Aśvatthāman
killing them all.

73 From the very start
of the Kaurava-Pāṇḍava war,
the soldiers saw apparitions
of this girl
and of Aśvatthāman,
the son of Droṇa.

74 Destiny-doomed warriors
from the start,
all of them, now killed
by Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman,
terrorising all creatures
with his horrendous roars.

75 The destiny-doomed warriors
recalled the premonitions
of the past days,
and thought:
"That terror is now
coming true."

76 The roaring cries
of Aśvatthāman
were so deafening
they woke up
hundreds of thousands
of brilliant bowmen.

77 Like Antaka-Yama
fulfilling the mission
of Doomsday Kāla,
Aśvatthāman severed the legs of some,
and the waists
and arms of others.

[X:8:78-83]

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78 *Prabhu*! Lord! It was gruesome,
they screamed in agony,
sliced and slashed and sundered.
Horse-and-elephant-trampled
corpses of soldiers
littered the field.

79 Grievously mutilated, some wailed:
"What is happening?
Who is doing all this?"
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
had for them become
Antaka-Kāla himself.

80 Not only the weaponless Pāṇḍavas
and Sṛñjayas,
but those who were armed –
all became targets
for the finest-of-annihilating warriors
Aśvatthāman.

81 Some who were drowsy with sleep
and half-awake
were jolted upright
by the fearful commotion;
but fear made them crawl
and hide themselves.

82 But terror numbed their limbs;
their strength and courage
suddenly vanished.
They moaned and whined in fear,
and clung
to each other.

83 Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman remounted
his chariot,
a fiercely clattering vehicle,
shooting arrows
that despatched many warriors
to the abode of Yama.

84 Even from a distance,
Aśvatthāman targeted
the finest-of-hostile warriors
and despatched them
to the realm of Kāla-rātri,
Doomsday Night.

85 From the front
of his speeding chariot,
he released arrows
as he swerved through their ranks,
scattering devastation
among his enemies.

86 Freely he roamed,
manoeuvring at will,
carrying his hundred-
moon-symbolled shield
and his sword that flashed
like the blue sky.

87 O Indra-among-rājās!
How they scattered about
in unparalleled terror –
all the warriors
woken out of stupor
by the commotion!

88 Devastating in battle,
O rājā,
Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman destroyed
the enemy tents
like an elephant despoiling
a large lake.

89 Some of his victims
screamed themselves hoarse,
shouting unintelligibly.
In the coufusion,
they could not locate
their weapons and uniforms.

90 Dazed and dishevelled,
they could not recognise each other.
Some ran, and fell;
others ran too,
but they ran about
in circles.

91 O Indra-among-rājās!
Some defecated,
some urinated in fear.
So many horses
and elephants
broke free,

92 And rushed chaotically,
spreading mahā-terror
as they panicked.
Many soldiers,
in fear, feigned death,
and sprawled on the field.

93 They were trampled
and mangled to pulp
by the horses and elephants.
O bull-brave Bharata!
In this scene of utter carnage,
rākṣasas,

94 O finest of the Bharatas,
celebrated with screams of joy.
O rājā!
This incredible cacophony,
created by hordes
of weird *bhūta*-creatures,

95 Reverberated
in all the ten directions
and tore through the sky.
The screams of the dying
terrified the horses
and elephants,

96 And they broke loose,
and trampled to death
the dwellers in tents.
The dust raised
by the hooves and feet
of the horses and elephants

97 Doubled the pitch darkness
of the dreadful night
that blanketed the tents.
That deep darkness
enhanced the atmosphere
of delusion and despair.

98 Father was unable
to make out son;
brother, brother.
Elephant attacked elephant,
riderless horse
attacked horse.

99 O Bharata descendant!
They mauled each other,
inflicting grievous injuries.
Bleeding profusely,
horses and elephants
stumbled and fell;

100 And while falling,
they toppled on others
and crushed them to death.
Many who happened
to be deep in slumber
that dark night

101 Woke up suddenly and,
compelled by Kāla,
started killing their relatives.
Guards and sentinels of outposts
ran helter-skelter,
abandoning their duty,

102 Utterly confused, not even knowing
which direction to run.
Prabhu! Lord!
In the commotion,
they could not make out
each other.

103 As if demented, they screamed,
doomed by destiny:
"O my son! *Tāta*! Dear one!"
Forsaking even their closest relatives,
they fled
in all directions.

104 They shouted
each other's names and *gotras*.
Many warriors lay
supine on the field,
moaning piteously,
"Hai! Hai!"

105 War-intoxicated Aśvatthāman,
son of Droṇa,
recognised and slaughtered them
one by one,
ceaselessly, though
they were semi-conscious –

106 All those Kṣatriyas
as they emerged in fear,
unsuspecting, from their tents.
As they panicked
and scampered out of their tents
to save their lives,

107 Kṛtavarman and Kṛpa
cut them down
at the tents' entrances.
Weaponless, armour-less,
dishevelled, they stood
with palms joined in *añjali*,

108 Terrified and trembling,
but not one was spared.
Not one
who came out
of the tent
escaped with his life.

109 Mahārāja!
Ill-minded Kṛtavarman and Kṛpa –
both were one-minded
on the best way
they could please
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman.

110 So, from three sides
they set fire
to the encampment.
In the light of the blazing tents,
sword in hand,
father-delighting

111 Aśvatthāman moved about,
O mahārāja Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
wherever he wished.
Some heroes
were standing their ground,
others fleeing.

112 Finest-of-the-twice-born
Aśvatthāman
cut them all down with his sword.
They were sliced in two
by the sword
of valiant

113 Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
as if they were
a bunch of seasame sticks.
Screaming men
and horses and huge elephants,
grievously wounded,

114 Fallen, lay in heaps
on the earth,
O bull-brave Bharata.
Butchered warriors,
thousands of them,
littered the field.

115 So many headless trunks,
still standing upright,
suddenly toppled.
So many *aṅgada*-adorned arms,
so many with weapons,
so many heads

116 Were sliced, O Bharata!
So many hands and feet,
so many elephant-trunk-shaped thighs,
backs
and flanks,
so many foreheads

117 Were sliced by mahātmā
Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman,
so many forced to flee.
So many were slashed
in the stomach,
so many had ears chopped off,

118 So many had shoulders
multilated,
and then neatly decapitated.
Laying waste
a multitude of humans,
he roamed freely.

119 The deep darkness doubled
the dreadful darshan
of rampaging Aśvatthāman.
Thousands of dead
and dying humans
and horses

120 And elephants –
a horrible spectacle
it was, indeed.
Yakṣas, rākṣasas,
broken chariots, horses,
elephants fearfully

121 Filled the field already
crowded with the victims
of Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman.
The wounded screamed
for their brothers,
fathers and sons.

122 Others said:
"Even the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
at their worst in battle
could not wreak
the havoc caused
by these cruel-karma rākṣasas.

123 Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons
are not with us today –
hence this carnage.
Antigods, gandharvas,
together with yakṣas
and rākṣasas,

124 Could not have defeated
Kaunteya-Arjuna
whom Janārdana-Krishna protects,
who is Brahma-devoted,
truth-speaking, self-disciplined,
and compassionate to all.

125 Pārtha-Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
never kills anyone
sleeping, or careless, unarmed,
performing *añjali,*
anyone fleeing,
anyone with hair dishevelled.

126 It's the cruel-karma rākṣasas
  who have perpetrated
this fearful carnage today."
  Many spoke out these feelings,
and prepared themselves
  for the worst.

127 And then, soon enough,
  the clamour died down,
and a mysterious stillness
  descended
on the tumultuously-tortured
  masses of humans.

128 O lord of the earth!
  The thick haze of dust
that blanketed
  the blood-soaked earth
suddenly cleared,
  and all became visible.

129 Like Lord-of-creatures
  Paśupati-Śiva,
enraged, slaughtering life,
  enraged Aśvatthāman
slaughtered the hiding,
  the helpless and the hopeless.

130 Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
  butchered them
indiscriminately –
  those who clung to each other,
those fleeing, those cowering,
  those bewildered.

131 On one side
  trapped in the flames,
on the other
  slaughtered by Aśvatthāman,
the warriors entered
  the abode of Yama.

132 O Indra-among-rājās!
Before half the night ended,
Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman
had despatched
the mahā-ranks of Pāṇḍava survivors
to Yama's realm.

133 A night of exultation
for creatures who roam
in the dark of the night,
a night of destruction
for human beings
and horses and elephants.

134 You could see rākṣasas
of horrid shapes
and blood-sucking *piśācas*
devouring the flesh
of human corpses
and drinking their blood.

135 Weird-looking were they,
reddish-complexioned
teeth like hill-peaks,
dust-smeared, matted-haired,
long-thighed, five-footed,
mahā-bellied.

136 Their fingers twisted backwards,
they were rough, ugly,
horrendous-voiced,
they wore garlands of bells
round their blue necks,
they were ferocious.

137 Their wives and children
accompanied them.
Very cruel and deformed,
utterly pitiless –
all those rākṣasas
of all kinds.

138 Hosts of them were joyfully
    slurping blood
and dancing wildly
    and exclaiming:
"Perfect! How pure
    and sweet and delicious!"

139 And other carnivores
    gorged themselves
on the fat and marrow
    and bones and blood
of the animal corpses
    on the field.

140 Others with deformed stomachs
    guzzled blood
and ran all over the field.
    Raw-flesh-consuming creatures,
multi-faced beings,
    could also be seen.

141 There were countless hordes
    of rākṣasas there,
dreadful to look at,
    of cruel karma –
hundreds of thousands
    of them,

142 Gorging themselves
    to their hearts' content.
O lord of men!
    Many other
flesh-eating creatures
    also congregated there.

143 Dawn came,
    and Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman decided
to leave the camp.
    His sword was so sticky
with clammy
    human blood,

144 It seemed, *prabhu*-lord,
his hand and the sword
were welded together.
Having achieved his difficult aim
of massacring the warriors,
Aśvatthāman shone

145 Like the fire of doom
at the end of a yuga,
incinerating all creatures.
Prabhu! Lord!
By that incredible feat,
having fulfilled his vow

146 To his father, Aśvatthāman,
having walked the perilous path,
freed his mind of grief.
Exactly as he
had entered
the silent sleeping tents,

147 Aśvatthāman, bull-brave hero,
left the silent,
now desolate tents.
Returning
from the silent desolate tents,
valiant Aśvatthāman,

148 O radiant Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
joyfully narrated his feat
to his two companions.
Dedicated to pleasing him
in every way,
his companions

149 Informed him that they
had slaughtered thousands
of Pāñcālas and Sṛñjayas.
The three of them,
delighted, roared fiercely
and clapped their hands.

150 And so it was that that night
became such
an awesome calamity,
resulting in the genocide
of the unsuspecting,
sleeping Somakas.

151 It is impossible
to escape
Doomsday Kāla.
Those who had killed us
were now
themselves dead.

152 "Aśvatthāman had vowed
(said Dhṛtarāṣṭra)
to make my son victorious.
What prevented
that mahā-chariot-hero
from doing all this earlier?

153 Why did that mahātmā
have to perpetrate
this heinous deed
only after the death
of Duryodhana?
Tell me this."

154 O enhancer of Kaurava glory!
(replied Sañjaya)
He was afraid
of percipient Keśava-Krishna,
and the sons
of Pṛthā-Kuntī

155 And Sātyaki, So Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
did what he did
in their absence.
With them around,
who could have killed these heroes?
The lord-of-the-Maruts

156 Indra could not have done it,
O rājā!
Vibho! O radiant lord!
They were killed in their sleep.
After that mahā-massacre
of the Pāṇḍavas,

157 The three mahā-chariot-heroes
said among themselves:
"Lucky! We are very lucky!"
Accepting the congratulations
of his companions,
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman

158 Joyfully clasped both
tightly to his heart,
and spoke these profound words:
"All the Pāñcālas are dead,
all the sons
of Draupadī,

159 All the Somaka
and Matsya leftovers.
I have killed them all.
We have succeeded
beyond expectation.
Let us hurry now
to rājā Duryodhana,
and give him this news –
let us hope
he is still alive."

SECTION NINE

1 After killing all the Pāñcālas
and Draupadī's sons
(continued Sañjaya), the three went
where Duryodhana lay wounded.

2 They found the lord of men
with life still in him.
Alighting from their chariots,
they stood around your son.

3 O Indra-among-rājās!
Thighs smashed,
he lay there, breathing heavily,
on the verge of death.
He was vomiting blood
on the bare ground.

4 He was surrounded by a horde
of horrendous animals,
carnivorous creatures,
and dogs waiting
to devour his body
and lick his blood.

5 Wracked by agonising pain,
writhing and rolling
on the ground, he tried hard,
every way he could,
to keep at bay
the bloodthirsty beasts.

6 They saw him lying there
coagulated with blood,
and they were stricken
with intense grief –
and they sat around him,
the three surviving heroes:

7 Aśvatthāman, Kṛpa,
and Kṛtavarman
of the Sātvata clan,
three mahā-chariot-heroes,
also blood-smeared,
also breathing heavily.

8 Rājā Duryodhana shone
like a vedī-altar
ringed by three ritual flames.
They saw the rājā
sprawled helpless
on the ground,

9 And all three were gripped
by inconsolable grief.
Gently they wiped the blood
on the rājā's face,
and softly and piteously
they wept.

10 "Fate is all-powerful,"
Kṛpa said.
"Look at Duryodhana,
lord of eleven *akṣauhiṇis,*
mutilated, helpless,
blurred with blood.

11 Look at this ruler,
radiant like gold,
this master of the mace,
supine on the ground
next to the gold-filigreed mace
he loved so much!

12 Never in battle was he
without his mace.
Now too, on his way
to heaven,
the mace accompanies
the heroic warrior.

13 Look at this lovely weapon
of *jāmbunada*-gold,
lying by the side
of the hero,
like a beloved wife
sleeping with her husband.

14 Look at the topsy-turvy
turnabout tricks
of Cosmic Time Kāla!
This foe-crushing leader
of crowned kings
rolling in the dust!

15 There was a time
when he laid low his enemies
on the field of battle.
Now his enemies
have laid low
this Kaurava rājā.

16 Hundreds of rājās once
paid fearful homage to him.
Now,
he lies on the ground,
this hero,
surrounded by fearful beasts."

17 O excellent Bharata descendant!
(continued Sañjaya)
Seeing the incomparable Kaurava
lying there helpless,
pity moved Aśvatthāman
to say:

18 "Once Brahmins used to wait
on this lord
for gifts of wealth.
Now, flesh-eating creatures
are waiting to feast
on his body.

19 O tiger-like rājā!
Renowned as the finest bowman!
Trained as the disciple
of Saṁkarṣaṇa-Balarāma,
in mace-combat you rivalled
lord-of-wealth Kubera!

20 O blameless king!
How was it possible
for wicked-ātmaned Bhīma
to defeat so expert
and valiant a mace-fighter
like you?

21 It is Kāla, mahārāja,
Kāla alone is all-powerful
in this world of ours,
or how else
could Bhīma have routed you
on the battlefield?

22 Yes, Kāla is irresistible!
Or how could that mean,
rascally, stupid wolf-waisted
Vṛkodara-Bhīma
have routed you who are wise
in all the dharmas?

23 Bhīma challenged you
to a clean combat of dharma,
and then, brutally,
using adharma,
he flung his mace to smash
both your thighs.

24 Using adharma, he broke your thighs.
Then he placed his foot
on your head!
Shame on Krishna,
shame on Yudhiṣṭhira,
who did not protest.

25 You were struck down
by unfair means.
So long as battles are fought
in this world,
warriors will ridicule
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma.

26 O rājā of the Bharata dynasty!
Balarāma of the Yādavas
used to say in every sabhā:
'There is none
who is the equal of Duryodhana
in mace combat.'

27 O Bharata descendant!
Prabhu! Lord!
Balarāma of the Vṛṣṇis boasted
in all assemblies of rājās:
'Kaurava Duryodhana
is my disciple in mace combat.'

28 What the great ṛṣis declare
as the noble end
of a Kṣatriya warrior
facing his enemies –
that noble end
has truly been yours.

29 O bull-brave Duryodhana!
I do not grieve for you.
My grief is for Gāndhārī
and your father,
who are mourning the deaths
of all their sons.

30 What is left for them now
but to roam the world
sorrow-stricken, like beggars?
Shame on Krishna
of the Vṛṣṇis! *Dhik!*
Shame on ill-minded Arjuna!

31 Proudly they say they know
what is dharma –
and then look the other way!
O lord of men!
Will they have the courage
to tell the Pāṇḍavas,

32 'This is the way
we killed Duryodhana'?
Son of Gāndhārī!
You are the one
favoured by fortune,
for you died on the field of battle

33 Facing your enemies with dharma
on your side,
O bull-brave hero!
But Gāndhārī,
with all her sons dead,
her relatives dead,

34 And formidable, wisdom-eyed,
blind Dhṛtarāṣṭra –
what will happen to them?
Shame on Kṛtavarman,
and shame on me,
and the mahā-chariot-hero Kṛpa

35 For not going to heaven first,
ahead of you,
O lord of the earth!
You gave us all we desired,
you protected
all your subjects.

36 Shame on us
that we are so mean
as to be still alive!
Through your generosity,
Kṛpa, and I,
and my father Droṇa

37 Saw our houses filled,
O tiger-among-men,
with gems and lavish luxury.
Through your grace,
we and our relatives
and friends

38 Performed elaborate sacrifices
and distributed
copious *dakṣiṇā*-offerings.
What will happen now
to such wretched creatures
like us

39 Left behind, with you gone,
taking to heaven
with you all the earth-lords?
Because, O rājā,
to the supreme goal
where you are going,

40 We are not accompanying you –
that is why we grieve.
Without heaven, and without
the wealth of the world,
what can we do but recall
the good deeds you did us?

41 O finest of the Kauravas!
What karma did we do
to deserve this sorrowful
separation from you?
We are doomed to a life
of endless suffering.

42 How will there be peace
for us, or joy,
O mahārāja, without you?
When you leave this world,
O rājā, and meet
all the mahā-chariot-heroes,

43 Give them my pūjā-respect,
according to their age and rank.
And after giving
your pūjā-respect
to your finest-flagged
bow-expert ācārya Droṇa,

44 Inform him on my behalf,
O lord of men,
'Dhṛṣṭadyumna has been killed
by Aśvatthāman.'
Embrace the mahā-chariot-hero
rājā Bāhlika,

45 The Sindhu ruler Jayadratha,
as well as
Somadatta and Bhūriśravas
and other unrivalled
lords of the earth
who have already reached heaven.

46 Embrace them all
on my behalf
and enquire
about their welfare.
This is all I ask."
Sañjaya continued:

47 Saying this to broken-thighed,
semi-conscious
rājā Duryodhana,
Aśvatthāman once more
looked at him,
and added:

48 "If you are alive, Duryodhana,
listen to me.
I have happy news for you.
Only seven Pāṇḍavas
are still living;
and three of us Kauravas.

49 The five Pāṇḍava brothers,
Vāsudeva-Krishna
and Sātyaki;
and I,
Kṛtavarman,
and Śaradvata's son Kṛpa.

[X:9:50-55]

Transcreated by P. Lal

50 O Bharata descendant!
Dead are all the sons
of Draupadī and Dhṛṣṭadyumna.
All the Pāñcālas
have been slaughtered,
and all the surviving Matsyas.

51 See the revenge we took!
We killed all
the Pāṇḍavas' sons,
all others sleeping in tents,
all the men and horses
and other animals also.

52 O lord of the earth!
I slipped inside
his camp at night,
and I myself throttled
criminal Dhṛṣṭadyumna
as I would a beast."

53 These heart-pleasing words
made Duryodhana
shake off his stupor.
Recovering his senses
he turned
and said:

54 "What Gaṅgā's son Bhīṣma,
what Karṇa,
what your father could not do –
you, with the help
of Kṛpa and Bhoja-Kṛtavarman,
have done.

55 With Śikhaṇḍin
and that scoundrelly general
Dhṛṣṭadyumna killed,
I feel today
I am the equal
of Maghavat-Indra himself!

56 May you all prosper!
    Bhadraṁ te!
We will meet again
    in heaven."
These were the last words
    of the mahā-minded Kuru-rājā.

57 Discarding his grief
    for his slain friends,
the hero gave up his *prāṇa*-breath;
    his spirit went
to a sacred heaven,
    his body remained on earth.

58 This was how your son
    Duryodhana died.
First to arrive on the field of battle,
    O king,
he was the last to leave
    the field of battle.

59 Repeatedly he embraced them,
    and they embraced him.
They kept looking back at him
    again and again
as they mounted their chariots
    and drove away.

60 I listened to the poignant words
    of Droṇa's son
Aśvatthāman,
    and I was deeply disturbed,
and early next morning
    I ran to the capital.

61 All the result, O rājā,
    of your wrong policy –
this fierce and fearful carnage
    of the armies
of the Kauravas
    and the Pāṇḍavas.

62 O blameless one!
I was crazed with grief
by the departure of your son
to heaven, and I lost
the power of divine insight
granted to me by ṛṣi Vyāsa.

63 The king heard the news
of his son's death
(continued Vaiśaṁpāyana).
Breathing heavily,
sighing long
and hot dry sighs,
he was plunged
into a deep depression.

SECTION TEN

1 The night passed
(continued Vaiśaṁpāyana),
and the charioteer
of Dhṛṣṭadyumna
informed Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
of the slaughter
that took place
of the sleeping warriors.

2 The *sūta*-charioteer said:
"O rājā!
The sons of Draupadī
and Drupada's children
have all been massacred
in their innocent sleep.

3 The entire camp
has been wiped out
by a concerted attack
by cruel Kṛtavarman,
Gautama-Kṛpa,
and wicked Aśvatthāman.

4 They have decimated your ranks
of soldiers, horses and elephants,
slaying thousands
with *prāsa*-barbed darts,
śakti-spears,
and *paraśu*-axes.

5 O Bharata descendant!
Like a mahā-forest
chopped and destroyed by axes,
your army was butchered
amid agonising wails
of mahā-lamentation.

6 O mahā-minded dharmātmā!
I am the sole survivor
of that murderous frenzy.
And I succeeded in escaping
only because
of Kṛtavarman's carelessness."

7 Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira heard
these inauspicious words;
the news of the deaths
of his sons
made the formidable foe-defying father
fall in a faint.

8 He was stopped just in time
by Sātyaki
from collapsing.
Bhīma, Arjuna,
and the twin sons of Mādrī
rushed to his help.

9 Grief-stricken Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira
recovered his senses,
and mumbled in anguish:
"I have defeated my enemies,
and am now
myself defeated.

10 Even those with divine insight
cannot fathom
how events will turn out.
The losers have won –
and the winners
have lost!

11 We killed brothers, friends,
fathers, sons, relatives,
well-wishers and counsellors
and grandsons –
and we thought we won.
But we have lost.

12 Sometimes meaningless
becomes meaningful,
and meaningful becomes meaningless.
Our meaningful victory
has turned into
a meaningless defeat.

13 Foolish indeed is the victor
who lives
to regret his conquest.
What kind of victory is his?
This so-called victory
is actually a defeat.

14 If in order to win
you commit the crime
of killing your kinsmen,
a time will come
when your enemies will kill you
if you are not careful.

15 *Karṇi* and *nālī*-arrows
were his teeth,
the sword his tongue,
the bow pulled full taut
his mouth,
its twang his war-cry –

16 Infuricated Karṇa in battle
was a man-lion
who never fled the field.
Those who escaped death at his hands
are the ones
who have killed my family members.

17 Chariots its whirlpools,
arrows its billows,
uniforms its pearls,
horses its sea-creatures,
spears and swords its fishes,
war-flags
its snakes and crocodiles,
bows its strong currents,
mahā-bows its foam,

18 The battle itself
was the moonrise –
such was the Droṇa-ocean
whose roar was the twang
of the bow and the clatter
of chariot-wheels.
The princes who with small
boat-weapons crossed this ocean
were careless, and were killed.

19 No cause for death
is worse in this world
than carelessness.
Prosperity in all forms
forsakes the person
who is habitually careless.
The careless person
will find adversity
sitting by his side.

20 The splendid war-flag
fluttering high
was the smoke of the fire,
arrows the flames,
anger the fanning wind,
The mahā-bow's twang
and hand-claps the crackle,
the armour and weapons
oblations in the fire,

21 The army itself
was dry summer grass
consumed by the fire –
such was the Bhīṣma-fire
lit by the myriad
weapons in his hands.
The princes who escaped
that blaze unscathed
have succumbed to carelessness.

22 No knowledge, tapasyā,
prosperity or fame
for the man who is careless.
See the example
of Mahendra-Indra!
Only when he gave up
his habit of carelessness
did he succeed
in routing his enemies.

23 See how these Indra-like
sons and grandsons
of rājās, all of them
valiant, have perished
because they were careless –
like neglectful traders
who bravely cross oceans
but drown in the shallow
ripples of a river.

24 They must be in heaven –
those who were slaughtered
in their sleep by enemies
bent on revenge.
Poor Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī!
I feel for her.
What will happen to her,
drowning in the desolate
depths of her grief?

25 As it is, her sorrows
have made her weak
and frail as a stick.
When she hears of the deaths
of her brothers and sons
and her father Drupada,
the Pāñcāla rājā,
she will surely
swoon on the ground.

26 She who deserves
the finest happiness –
what will she do
in the searing sorrow
that now afflicts her?
The slaughter of her sons
and brothers will haunt her,
and the flames of despair
will consume her."

27 Grieving in this manner,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
turned to Nakula,
and said to him:
"Go immediately
to sorrowing Draupadī
and escort the princess
here, to me,
with her maternal relatives."

28 Abiding by dharma,
Mādri's son Nakula
followed the advice
of Dharma-rāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
and drove his chariot
to the palace of Draupadī
where the wives of the rājā
of Pāñcāla, Drupada,
were also staying.

29 After the departure
of the son of Mādrī,
Ajamīḍha-Yudhiṣṭhira,
still afflicted with grief,
with tears in his eyes,
proceeded with his friends
to the field of the massacre
of his sons, still teeming
with creatures of all kinds.

30 There, on the field,
was the gruesome,
inauspicious spectacle
of his sons and well-wishers
and loved-and-loving *sakhās*
sprawled on the earth,
splattered with blood,
their bodies mutilated,
their heads severed.

31 Seeing that horror,
finest of men-of-dharma
grieving Yudhiṣṭhira,
the jewel of the Kauravas,
wept profusely
and incessantly,
and he and his friends,
one by one, fell
senseless on the ground.

SECTION ELEVEN

1 Grief gripped Yudhiṣṭhira, Janamejaya,
(continued Vaiśaṁpāyana),
seeing his sons, grandsons, and friends
all lying dead.

2 Memories flashed through the mind
of mahātmā Yudhiṣṭhira,
spawning mahā-sorrow for all his sons,
grandsons and relatives.

3 Tears welled in his eyes,
his body trembled,
his mind whirled.
His friends accompanying him
did their best to revive
and console him.

4 Around the same time,
Nakula in a chariot
that dazzled like the sun
arrived there,
bringing with him
grief-stricken Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī.

5 Draupadī was in the city
called Upaplavya
where she broke down
when she heard the news
of the gruesome murder
of her sons.

6 Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī, grieving,
stood before
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira;
she was swaying,
she fell like a plantain tree
struck by a storm.

7 Her face that was lovely
like a full-blown lotus,
her face graced
with beautiful large eyes
was lustreless with grief,
like a cloud-darkened sun.

8 Seeing her on the ground,
truly valiant
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma,
burning with anger,
rushed forward and lifted her
gently with both arms.

9 Bhīma tried to comfort
lovely Draupadī,
but Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
kept sobbing uncontrollably,
and turning to Bhārata Pāṇḍava
Yudhiṣṭhira she said:

10 "How fortunate you are, O rājā;
you have followed
Kṣatriya-dharma,
and you will enjoy the earth
after affering all your sons
to the god of death Yama.

11 Son of Pṛthā-Kuntī!
How fortunate you are
to be alive to rule this
musth-elephant-orbiting earth.
Do you remember at all
Subhadrā's son Abhimanyu?

12 It's a good thing too
that you will now
live with me in Upaplavya,
and forget all about your sons
who died in the cause
of Kṣatriya-dharma.

13 Son of Pṛthā-Kuntī!
When I hear
how the despicable son of Droṇa
killed my sleeping sons,
I burn like dry wood
consumed by fire.

14 If you do not show how brave
you are in battle,
and refuse to kill
Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman –
he, the despicable one,
and his followers –

15 Then listen to me,
all you sons of Pāṇḍu! –
and listen carefully –
I will fast unto death
if Droṇa's son does not reap
the fruits of his crime."

16 With these words,
the illustrious lady
Yājñasenī-Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
went and sat
beside Pāṇḍu's son
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira.

17 Seeing his beloved queen,
lovely-to-look-at
cārudarśana-Draupadī
sitting beside him,
rājā-ṛṣi dharmātmā
Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira said:

18 "*Śubhe*! Auspicious lady!
You are wise in dharma.
Your sons and brothers
fought by dharma,
and died by dharma.
You should not mourn for them.

19 Gracious lady!
Droṇa's son has fled
to an inaccessible forest.
Lovely lady,
even if he is killed,
how will you be convinced?"

20 "He was born with a gem
on his forehead,"
replied Draupadī.
"So I have heard.
Kill that criminal.
Bring me that gem.

21 I will place that gem
on your head, O rājā.
And so I will live.
I have made up my mind."
Lovely Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī said this
to Pāṇḍu's son rājā-Yudhiṣṭhira.

22 Then she went to Bhīma
and said to him
with deep seriousness:
"Bhīma! I beg of you: Save me!
Remember Kṣatriya-dharma,
and save me.

23 Kill that criminal,
like Maghavat-Indra
killing the antigod Śambara.
There is none in this world
who equals you
in valour.

24 The whole world knows you
as the one
who became an island of refuge
to Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons
when crisis threatened them
in Vāraṇāvata.

25 You saved us
when we encountered Hiḍimba.
And when I was harassed
by Kīcaka
in the capital
of Virāṭa,

26 It was you who saved me,
like Maghavat-Indra
protecting Paulomī-Śacī.
O Pārtha-Bhīma!
Repeat your mahā-feats
of the past,

27 And kill Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman,
O foe-slayer,
and live happily."
The anguish
of suffering Draupadī,
expressed in so many ways,

28 Was more than Bhīma,
the mahā-powerful son of Kuntī,
could bear.
He climbed
into a dazzling gold-ornamented
mahā-chariot,

29 And, with an arrow
fitted into a beautifully
decorated bow,
with Nakula as his charioteer,
he drove off to kill
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman.

30 Keeping his bow
at the ready,
he demanded more speed.
O tiger-among-men!
Nakula urged the horses
the fastest he could,

31 And they galloped
with the swiftness
of wind.
O Bharata descendant!
Emerging from his camp,
following the chariot-tracks
of Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman,
Bhīma pushed steadily ahead,
determined
to hunt down Aśvatthāman.

SECTION TWELVE

1 So Bhīma left (said Vaiśaṁpāyana)
and after the formidable hero's departure,
lotus-eyed Krishna said
to Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira:

2 "Son of Pāṇḍu!
Overpowered by grief
over the deaths of the sons,
your brother has driven off
by himself
to kill Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman.

3 O bull-brave Bharata!
You love Bhīma more
than you do the other brothers.
He is in danger now.
Why do you make no effort
to help him?

4 Destroyer-of-enemy-cities'
Droṇa has given his son
the missile known
as the Brahmaśira
which has the power to obliterate
the whole world.

5 Pleased with Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
mahā-fortune-favoured
mahātmā Droṇa,
finest of all bow-wielders,
initially offered the missile
to Arjuna.

6 Because his only son Aśvatthāman
asked it of him,
he gave the missile
to his son,
but he was not happy
doing what he did.

7 He knew how impulsive
and undependable
his ill-ātmaned son was;
so the wise-in-all-dharmas'
ācārya Droṇa
advised his son:

8 '*Tāta*! My dear child!
You must not use
this missile against humans
on the battlefield,
no matter how terrible
the crisis.'

9 O bull-brave Yudhiṣṭhira!
Guru Droṇa
said this much, and more:
'I am troubled.
I do not think you will follow
the noble path.'

10 These displeasing words of his futher
so upset Aśvatthāman,
the wicked-ātmaned son,
that he gave up the idea
of improving himself, and sadly
began roaming the earth.

11 O descendant of Bharata!
Finest of the Kauravas!
When you were in the forest,
he visited Dvārakā,
and the Vṛṣṇis
simply adored him.

12 One day, he happened to be
on the sea-coast
in Dvārakā.
He came to me, all alone,
on the beach,
and he said to me:

13 'Krishna! My truly valiant father,
ācārya Droṇa
of the Bharata dynasty,
after intense tapasyā,
succeeded in obtaining
from Agastya

14 The missile called the Brahmaśira
which is pūjā-respected
by gods and gandharvas.
That missile, O Dāśārha,
which was once with my father,
is now with me.

15 O finest of the Yādavas!
Accept from me
this divine missile,
and give me in exchange
your all-foe annihilating
cakra-missile.'

16 O bull-brave Bharata!
Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira!
He stood before me humbly,
palms folded in *añjali*,
asking for my missile.
Pleased, I replied:

17 'Gods, Dānava antigods,
gandharvas, humans,
birds and *uraga*-serpents –
together they cannot
equal one-hundredth part
of my valour.

18 I have this bow,
this śakti-spear,
this cakra and this mace.
I will give you
whichever of these
strikes your fancy.

19 You do not have to give me
your own missile.
Whichever of these weapons
you can wield
in battle,
is yours to have.'

20 Mahā-fortune-favoured Aśvatthāman,
as if daring me,
chose the iron cakra
whose splendid hub
is thunder-hard
and ringed with a thousand spokes.

21 So I said to him:
'It's yours.'
No sooner said
than he leapt forward
and clutched the cakra
with his left hand.

22 Unable to remove it
from its place,
he extended
his right hand
in an attempt
to dislodge it.

23 He tried his hardest –
he could not stir it.
His hardest again –
no success.
He could neither hold it,
nor dislodge it.

24 O Bharata descendant!
Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman
was hugely frustrated.
No matter how intense the effort,
the result
was failure.

25 Finally, when he game up
his desire
to possess the cakra,
and was debilitated with despair,
I said
to disappointed Aśvatthāman:

26 'He who is known
as the finest of men,
who wields the Gāṇḍīva-bow
and is white-horse-charioted,
whose war-flag
has the ape symbol,

27 Who dared to defeat in duel,
and succeeded
eminently in pleasing,
the god of gods,
the blue-throated consort of Umā,
Saṅkara-Śiva himself,

28 Than whom no person
in this world
is dearer to me,
to whom I am prepared
to give away wives,
sons, everything, –

29 O Brahmin, that Pārtha-Arjuna
of magnificent karma,
even that very dear friend of mine
never dared
to speak to me such words
as you have spoken!

30 To obtain whom I went
to the Himālayas
where I practised brahmacarya
and observed
the severest tapasyā
for twelve years,

31 Who was born to Rukmiṇī
who practised
tapasyā as severe as mine,
and who is radiant
like Sanatkumara himself –
my son Pradyumna –

32 O fool of a Brahmin,
even he never
dared ask me to give him
my unique,
celestial mahā-cakra-missile,
as you have done.

33 Even infinitely powerful Balarāma
never dared
to ask for this cakra.
Even Gada and Sāmba
never asked
what you have asked.

34 The mahā-chariot-heroes
of the Andhakas
and Vṛṣṇis
who live in Dvārakā
have never asked
what you have asked.

35 *Tāta*! Dear Aśvatthāman!
Incomparable chariot-hero!
You are the son of the ācārya
of the Bharata dynasty.
The Yadavas respect you.
Who will you fight with this cakra?'

36 He heard me out. Then,
Droṇa's son said:
'Krishna, first I will give you
my pūjā-respect.
Then I will fight
with you.

37 *Vibho*! Radiant one!
I will be truthful.
I went this god-and-antigod-
pūjā-respected cakra
because I want
to be invincible.

38 But I see, Keśava-Krishna,
that I have failed.
So I take my leave.
Before I go, Govinda-Krishna,
bless me.
Say: 'May all go well with you.

39 This is a terrible weapon.
You are the most terrible
of terrible heroes.
This cakra is yours –
none else in this world
has a right to it.'

40 Saying this much,
Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman
readied the horses,
and loading his chariot
with wealth and gems,
he left.

41 He is anger-obsessed.
He is wicked-ātmaned.
He is whimsical and crafty.
He is cruel.
He knows how to shoot
the Brahmaśira missile.
It is imperative
that we protect
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma."

SECTION THIRTEEN

1 Saying this (continued Vaiśaṁpāyana),
the foremost warrior,
Yādava-delighting Krishna mounted
his excellently equipped chariot.

2 Golden garlands adorned
his Kāmboja horses.
Excellent were the axles
of his chariot
which shone with the splendour
of the rising sun.

3 The horses on the right
and left were Shaibya
and Sugrīva,
and behind them
were Meghapuṣpa
and Balāhaka.

4 Atop the chariot fluttered
the celestial flag
studded with gems, fashioned
by the divine artificer Viśvakarman,
waving high,
like a magical māyā.

5 The symbol on the flag
was Vinatā's son Garuḍa,
dazzling like the sun-mandala,
the snake-devourer
atop the chariot
of truth-triumphant Krishna.

6 First to ascend the chariot
was unrivalled bow-expert
Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna,
followed by
truly accomplished Arjuna
and Kuru-rāja Yudhiṣṭhira.

7 Standing in the chariot
beside Krishna,
the Śārṅga-bow-wielding
hero of the Dāśārhas,
the two mahātmās shone
like Vāsava. Indra with the twin Aśvins.

8 With the two brothers
comfortably ensconced
in his chariot that received
the pūjā-respect of the world,
Dāśārha-Krishna
urged the horses forward.

9 And they seemed to fly,
those four horses
of that splendid chariot
that carried
the two sons of Pāṇḍu
and glorious Yādava-Krishna.

10 And as the horses speedily
carried the wielder
of the Śārṅga-bow Krishna,
the sound of their swiftness
was like that of birds
swooping in the sky.

11 O bull-brave Bharata!
At that speed,
in no time at all,
the three tiger-like heroes
caught up
with Bhīma.

12 But the three mahā-chariot-heroes
were unable
to stop Kuntī's son Bhīma,
for he was aflame with anger,
and determined
to kill his enemy.

13 Even as the three radiant heroes
watched,
he sped past them
on his swift horses,
galloping to the bank
of the Bhāgīrathī river,

14 Where it was reported
Aśvatthāman, the murderer
of the sons of the Pāṇḍavas,
had been seen.
There, near the river,
he saw the illustrious mahātmā

15 Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa
sitting with a group of ṛṣis.
There also,
ghee-anointed,
wearing a dress of kuśa-grass,
the cruel-karma

16 Son of Droṇa, he saw;
Aśvatthāman's body
was covered with dust.
Brandishing his bow and arrows,
Kuntī's son Bhīma
ran towards him.

17 Mahā-muscled Bhīma shouted:
"Don't move!
Stay where you are!"
Aśvatthāman saw fierce Bhīma
rushing at him
with bow and arrows.

18 Behind Bhīma, in the chariot
of Janārdana-Krishna,
were two more Pāṇḍava brothers.
Alarmed,
Aśvatthāman decided
on the best course of action.

19 Overcoming his fear and scruples,
Aśvatthāman invoked
the celestial and ultimate weapon.
With his left hand,
Droṇa's son picked up
a blade of grass.

20 He was not going to give in
to the warriors
threatening him with divine weapons.
In his predicament
he resorted to the use
of his celestial weapon.

21 Angrily he intoned these
fearful words:
"Rid me of the Pāṇḍavas!"
O tiger-among-rājās!
With these words,
the valiant son of Droṇa

22 Released the missile
calculated to produce
stupefying chaos
in all the worlds.
That blade of grass
exploded in an all-consuming
Kāla-Antaka-and-Yama-like conflagration.
It seemed
to engulf the three worlds
in total destruction.

SECTION FOURTEEN

1 From the very first (said Vaiśaṁpāyana),
Dāśārha-Krishna realised
the intention of Aśvatthāman;
he said to mahā-muscled Arjuna:

2 "Arjuna! Arjuna! Son of Pāṇḍu!
The time has come for you
to use the divine missile of Droṇa
you have in your heart.

3 O Bharata descendant!
To save your brothers
and to save yourself,
use it now!
Only this missile can neutralise
all other missiles."

4 No sooner had Keśava-Krishna
said these words
than the foe-exterminating
Pāṇḍava Arjuna
leapt down from his chariot
with bow and arrow.

5 Scorcher-of-foes Arjuna said,
"*Svasti*, Aśvatthāman!
May you prosper, O ācārya's son!"
Then, wishing his own welfare,
and the welfare
of his brothers,

6 He namaskāra-ed the gods
and his gurus,
and thinking of the good of all,
he intoned,
"Let this missile calm that missile,"
and he released his weapon.

7 Shot from the Gāṇḍīva,
flaming with mahā-splendour,
the missile dazzled
like the all-consuming fire
of universal dissolution
at the end of a yuga.

8 And the weapon discharged
by Droṇa's radiant son
burst
into fearful flames
like a colossal maṇḍala
of fire.

9 And suddenly,
thunder pealed,
thousands of meteors
fell from the sky,
and fear gripped
all living creatures.

10 Cacophony crackled
in the sky,
and lapping flames
licked the directions.
The hill-forest-and-plant-
filled earth trembled.

11 And as the flames
began laying waste
all the worlds,
there appeared
on the scene
two mahā-ṛṣis:

12 The ātman-of-all-creatures
Sarva-bhūtātmā Nārada
and the Bharata Grandfather
Pitāmaha Vyāsa.
To pacify the two heroes,
Aśvatthāman and Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,

13 Both the supremely radiant munis,
wise in all dharmas,
and seeking the ultimate good
of all creatures,
stationed themselves
between the incandescent missiles.

14 Both the incomparable ṛṣis
stood there,
illustrious and irresistible,
blocking the missiles,
like two magnificent
purifying *pāvaka*-fires

15 No creature had the power
to defy them,
gods and Dānava antigods
honoured them,
the welfare of the worlds
was what motivated them.

16 Both the ṛṣis said:
"What is possessing you,
O brave heroes,
to indulge
in this mahā-massace?
Many mahā-chariot-heroes
have graced the past –
shot many weapons –
but never has any
discharged a missile like yours
with the power
to wipe out mankind."

SECTION FIFTEEN

1 O tiger-among-men!
(continued Vaiśaṁpāyana),
seeing the two fire-radiant ṛṣis,
Gāṇḍīva-wielding
mahā-chariot-hero Arjuna retracted
his divine missile.

2 O excellent Bharata!
He said, palms joined in *añjali,*
"My aim was to neutralise enemy-missile
with counter-missile.

3 Now that I have decided
to retract my missile,
crime-perpetrating Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman
will exterminate
all of us
with his fierce energy.

4 You are truly like gods.
Advise me.
Tell me what I should do
that will ensure my own good,
and the good
of the world."

5 Saying this, Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
withheld his missile.
Even the gods find it
very difficult
to keep back a missile
on the field of battle.

6 No one, not even Śatakratu-Indra
of a hundred sacrifices,
had the śakti to retract
a divine missile
once discharged in battle,
except Pāṇḍava-Arjuna.

7 Because that missile was charged
with Brahmā-energy,
only a perfect practiser
of brahmacarya
had the power to recall it
after its release.

8 If an imperfect practiser
of brahmacarya
tried recalling it after release,
it would recoil on him
and slice his head and the heads
of all his relatives.

9 Arjuna was a strict-vowed brahamacārī.
After obtaining
that hard-to-obtain missile,
he resolutely refrained
from using it
even in the worst of crises.

10 Pāṇḍava Arjuna,
valiant warrior,
vowed-to-the-truth brahamacārī,
obedient to his guru,
did what needed doing –
called back the missile.

11 Confronted by the ṛṣis,
Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman also
tried his hardest to recall
his murderous missile,
but despite his best efforts
he failed.

12 O rājā!
Dejected by his inability
to recall in battle
the supreme missile,
Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman said
to island-born Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa:

13 "O muni! In mortal danger,
fearing for my life,
threatened by the attack
of Bhīma,
I shot this missile
in self-defence.

14 *Bhagavan*! Revered one!
Lies! Lies and adharma
were the means
used by Bhīma
to kill in combat
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son Duryodhana.

15 Brahmin! I know my ātman
is far from fulfilled.
But I dared nonetheless
to shoot this missile.
It is not possible for me
to call it back now.

16 Charging this formidable
and divine missile
of fiery energy with mantras,
I released it
to exterminate
all the Pāṇḍavas.

17 Because it was invoked
for the destruction
of the Pāṇḍavas,
this missile
will today massace
the Pāṇḍavas' sons too.

18 Passionate anger possessed me,
O Brahmin,
and made me perpetrate
this heinous deed
of wiping out the entire
Pāṇḍava family."

19 "*Tāta*, my child," said Vyāsa,
"Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
also has the Brahmaśira,
but never, even in anger,
did he use it against you
on the battlefield.

Transcreated by P. Lal

20 On the contrary – he used it
only in self-defence,
to counter your missile;
not only that –
he did shoot it,
but he has now retracted it.

21 Mahā-muscled Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
obtained the Brahma-missile
from your father,
whose advice
on Kṣatriya-dharma
he scrupulously followed.

22 He is patient and virtuous,
expert in war-weapons,
honest and noble.
Why are you obsessed
with destroying him
and all his brothers and family?

23 The land where one Brāhma-missile
collides
with another such missile
is laid waste,
and becomes a waterless desert
for twelve years.

24 Which is why mahā-muscled,
śakti-rich Pāṇḍava Arjuna
refrained from neutralising
your missile with his,
for he cherishes
the good of all mankind.

25 O mahā-armed Aśvatthāman!
Think of the Pāṇḍavas,
think of the kingdom, of yourself,
think of the safety
of everyone – and call back
your divine missile.

26 Calm your burning anger!
May Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons
remain unharmed!
Rāja-ṛṣi Yudhiṣṭhira
does not want victory
through adharma.

27 Give them the gem
that adorns your head.
In return,
the Pāṇḍavas
will grant you
your life."

28 Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman replied:
"More precious
is my gem
than all the gems
of the Pāṇḍavas,
and the gold of the Kauravas.

29 Whoever wears this gem
is freed from fear
of weapons, disease, hunger;
nor does he fear gods,
Dānava antigods
and nāga-snakes;

30 Nor rākṣasas and robbers.
Such is the power
of my gem.
On no account
will I surrender it
to anyone.

31 But since you have asked me,
bhagavan, revered one,
I will do as you say.
Here is the gem!
And here am I!
But this grass-blade, entering

32 The wombs of Pāṇḍava women –
this cannot be stopped.
It is irresistible, dreadful.
I do not have the śakti,
bhagavan, revered one,
to call it back.

33 O mahā-muni!
In no way can I stop it
from entering their wombs.
But your other commands,
O *bhagavan*, revered one,
I will not disobey."

34 "O blameless one!" said Vyāsa.
"Do it then.
Think of nothing else.
Shoot this weapon
into the Pāṇḍava yonis,
and calm your rage."

35 In accordance
with the words
of island-born
Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
Aśvatthāman lifted
the weapon,
aimed and hurled it
at the wombs
of the Pāṇḍava women.

SECTION SIXTEEN

1 The news that Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman
had targeted the wombs
of the Pāṇḍava women
delighted Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna
(continued Vaiśampāyana).
He said to Aśvatthāman:

[X:16:2-7]

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2 "When Virāṭa's daughter,
who is the daughter-in-law
of Gāṇḍīva-wielding Arjuna,
was in Upaplavya, a Brahmin told her.

3 'When the Kaurava lineage
faces extinction,
a son named Parīkṣit,
the Last-of-the-Line,
will be born to you
as the sole surviving descendant.

4 That Brahmin sādhu's prophecy
will come true.
Uttarā's son Parīkṣit
will be born
to continue
the Pāṇḍava line."

5 Even as Govinda-Krishna
of the Sātvatas
was saying this,
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
angrily interrupted him,
saying:

6 "Lotus-eyed Krishna!
You are partial
to the Pāṇḍavas, Keśava.
This cannot happen.
What I have said
cannot be undone.

7 You are so eager
to protect her, Krishna –
but nothing can prevent
my weapon from piercing
the womb
of Virāṭa's daughter Uttarā."

8 Bhagavān Krishna replied:
"Your infalliable weapon
will fall where it will fall.
The foetus will die.
But it will revive,
and live a long life.

9 As for you, those who know
know you
as a coward and a criminal,
a perpetrator
of wicked deeds,
a butcher of babies.

10 You will suffer the fruit
of your crimes.
You are doomed
to roam this earth
for a span
of three thousand years.

11 No one will walk
with you, no one
will talk with you.
You will wander
from place to place,
absolutely alone.

12 Scoundrel!
You will be shunned
by human beings.
You will stink of pus and blood.
You will hide
in inaccessible places.

13 Criminal Aśvatthāman!
Your body will be wracked
by dreaded diseases.
Parīkṣit will live long,
and study the Vedas
and keep strict vows,

14 And learn from Kṛpa,
  the son of Śaradvat,
mastery of all war-weapons.
  After achieving proficiency in weapons,
he will practise
  Kṣatriya-dharma;

15 And in this manner
  the dharmātmā king
will rule for sixty years.
  So the mahā-muscled
Kaurava rājā
  will he be,

16 Before your very eyes,
  the very same Parīkṣit.
You wicked-minded scoundrel!
  I will revive the baby
your missile kills, by the power
  of my truth and tapasyā."

17 "You have been disrespectful,"
  added Vyāsa,
"and done this dreadful deed.
  You are a Brahmin,
yet you have behaved
  in this manner,

18 Preferring to take on the dharma
  of a Kṣatriya.
That is why
  all that Devakī's son Krishna
says about you,
  surely will come true."

19 "Brahmin!" said Aśvatthāman.
  "You are the only human
I will be with now.
  May the words
of Bhagavān Puruṣottama-Krishna
  come true!"

20 Handing over his gem
to the mahātmā Pāṇḍavas
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
sadly left for the forest.
They kept looking at him.

21 Having killed all their foes,
the Pāṇḍavas,
placing Govinda-Krishna,
Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa
and mahā-muni Nārada
at their head,

22 And taking with them the gem
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
was born with, quickly went
to strong-willed Draupadī
who had taken the *prāya*-vow
to fast to death.

23 Those tiger-brave heroes,
accompanied
by Krishna of the Dāśārhas,
arrived at their camp,
on magnificent
wind-swift horses.

24 Afflicted with grief themselves,
the mahā-chariot-heroes
dismounted from their chariots,
and hurried to where
Drupada's daughter Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
sat sorrow-stricken.

25 Approaching the joy-bereft,
grief-tortured lady,
the Pāṇḍavas,
with Keśava-Krishna,
formed a ring
around her.

26 Taking rājā Yudhiṣṭhira's permission,
mahā-powerful Bhīma
approached her,
placed the gem
in her hand,
and said to her:

27 "Gracious lady!
Here is the gem.
We have vanquished
the murderer of your sons.
Stand up! Stop grieving!
Respect Kṣatriya-dharma.

28 Lady with lovely collyrium-
dark eyes!
Gentle lady! Do you remember
what you said to Madhu-slayer
Vāsudeva-Krishna
when he left on his peace mission?

29 'Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira is so eager
to make peace –
but I have no husbands,
no sons, no brothers –
I do not even have you,
O Govinda-Krishna!'

30 Those were the bitter words
you spoke
to Puruṣottama-Krishna.
Words consistent
with Kṣatriya-dharma.
Do you remember?

31 The swindling scoundrel Duryodhana
who stole our kingdom
is dead.
I drank the blood
of Duḥśāsana
as he lay writhing on the field.

32 We have avenged ourselves.
We have paid our debt.
No one can blame us.
We have defeated Aśvatthāman.
We let him go free: he's a Brahmin,
and our guru's son.

33 But we have shamed him, O devī!
His glory is gone.
All he has is his body!
We have taken his gem.
He has nothing on this earth,
not even his weapons."

34 "O Bharata descendant!" said Draupadī.
"A guru's son to me
is like the guru himself.
I wanted a crime punished.
That is done. Let rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.
wear the gem on his own head."

35 Treating the gem as a gift
from his guru,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira followed
the advice of Draupadī
and placed the celestial gem
on his head.

36 With that incomparable
celestial gem
adorning his head,
powerful rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
looked like a mountain shimmering
with the rising of the moon.

37 Grieving-over-her-sons'-deaths
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
strong of will, rose, and gave up
her fast to the death.
Mahā-muscled Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
asked Krishna a question.

SECTION SEVENTEEN

1 Vaiśampāyana continued:
Three chariot-heroes killed a whole army.
Troubled by this, rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
asked Krishna of the Dāśārhas:

2 "How could this have happened,
tell me, Krishna?
How could that despicable wretch,
that crooked-karma son of Droṇa
succeed in slaughtering
all my mahā-chariot-hero sons?

3 Not just they – Drupada's sons,
masters of all weapons,
capable of routing
hundreds of thousands of warriors –
how did Droṇa's son manage
to kill them as well?

4 And Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
the finest of all chariot-heroes,
whom even the mahā-bowman Droṇa
dare not challenge –
how did he fall victim
to Aśvatthāman?

5 O bull-brave hero!
How did Aśvatthāman enjoy
such a wonderful karma
that he was able
to wipe out, singlehanded,
alll our warriors?"

6 Śrī Bhagavān Krishna replied:
"Dauṇi-Aśvatthāman
sought the help of god-of-gods,
Īśvara-of-īśvara Śiva,
and so was able singlehanded
to kill so many.

7 Mahādeva Śiva, properly propitiated,
has the power
to grant immortality.
Lord-of-mountains Girisa-Śiva
can humble
Indra himself.

8 O bull-brave Bharata!
I know all
about Mahādeva-Śiva.
I know all
about his achievements
in the past.

9 O Bharata descendant!
He is the beginning,
the middle and the end
of all creatures.
It is his glory that energises
the universe.

10 Before Lord Pitāmaha Brahmā
created the world,
he visualised Śiva, and said:
'Create the world
of living and breathing creatures.
Do not delay.'

11 Fair-haired Hṛṣikeśa-Śiva,
the deity with insight
into human frailties, said,
'I will do so,'
and plunged into a prolonged
mahā-tapasyā.

12 Pitāmaha Brahmā
waited long for Śiva,
and then, by the power
of his creative mind,
he projected another world-maker
for the purpose of creation.

13 Seeing Giriśa-Śiva sleeping
in the waters of tapasyā,
he said
to Pitamaha Brahmā,
'I will create only if no one
has already been created.'

14 To which Pitā Brahmā replied,
'None has been created
ahead of you.
Sthāṇu-Śiva is sunk in tapasyā.
You can proceed and create
as you please.'

15 So he created seven varieties of life,
including
Dakṣa and other Prajāpatis,
and with their help
he created the four-fold
forms of life.

16 The instant they were produced,
O rājā,
the hunger-stricken creatures
ran towards
their Prajāpati father
determined to eat him.

17 And he, to protect himself
from his hungry progeny,
ran to Pitāmaha Brahmā,
saying, '*Bhagavān*! Save me!
Give them also the means
to survive.'

18 So Brahmā gave for their survival
herbs and plants.
He also ordained
for weaker creatures
to be the nourishment
of stronger creatures.

19 Their means of sustenance
thus assured, O rājā,
the newly created creatures
left happily,
and their wombs fructified,
and they multiplied.

20 They multiplied,
and Loka-guru Brahmā was gratified.
Then the first-born being,
the eldest, Śiva,
emerged from the waters,
and saw the teeming creation.

21 He saw the vivid variety
of created life
multiplying and prospering.
This so enraged Rudra-Śiva
that he cut off
his liṅga-penis.

22 The cast-off liṅga stuck
in the ground,
where it fell.
Imperishable Avyaya-Brahmā
calmed Śiva
with soft and soothing speech:

23 'What were you doing immersed
in the waters so long,
O Śarva-Śiva?
Why did you
fling your liṅga
on the earth?'

24 Livid with fury,
Loka-guru Śiva said in reply
to Guru Brahmā:
'What use is this penis to me?
Someone else has already
populated the earth.

[X:17:25-26; 18:1-4]

Transcreated by P. Lal

25 Listen to me, Pitāmaha-Brahmā!
By my tapasyā in the waters
I have provided food
for all creatures.
As creatures multiply,
so will plant-food multiply.'

26 Saying this, Bhava-Śiva
of mahā-tapasyā,
still burning with anger,
went to the mountain
called Muñjavata
to practise more tapasyā."

SECTION EIGHTEEN

1 Śrī Bhagavān Krishna continued:
"The yuga of the gods,
the Satya-yuga passed,
and the gods desired
to perform a yajña in accordance
with Vedic ritual.

2 So they collected the sacred ghee
and other essentials,
and decided who would receive
the yajña-offerings.

3 O lord of men!
Lacking sufficient knowledge
of Rudra-Śiva,
they did not arrange
for yajña-offerings
for Sthāṇu-Śiva.

4 Seeing nothing apportioned for him,
tiger-skin-wearing Kṛttivāsa-Śiva
first materialised
a bow
in order to teach the gods
a lesson.

5 There are five kinds of yajñas:
Loka-yajña: World-Sacrifice
Kriya-yajña: Ritual-Sacrifice
Gṛha-yajña: Domestic-Sacrifice
Sanātana-yajña: 5-element Eternal Sacrifice
And the 5th Nṛya-yajña: Human Sacrifice.

6 Yajña-offering-seeker
knotted-haired Kapardin-Śiva
fashioned his bow
out of the Loka-yajña –
it was a full
five arm's-lengths long.

7 O descendant of Bharata!
The sacred *vaṣaṭ*-chant
became the bow's bowstring
The bow's four parts
were adorned with *snāna*, *dāna*,
homa and *japa* rituals.

8 Brandishing that bow,
still livid with rage,
Mahādeva-Śiva
arrived at the spot
where the gods
were performing the yajña.

9 Seeing that imperishable brahmacārī deity
Śiva
advancing with uplifted bow,
the earth goddess Pṛthivī devī
was alarmed.
Her mountains trembled.

10 Wind stopped blowing.
Fire, fed,
stopped burning.
The maṇḍala of stars,
agitated,
started swirling in the sky.

Transcreated by P. Lal

11 Sun's radiance
diminished.
The moon-maṇḍala
dwindled.
Gross darkness
shrouded ākāśa-space.

12 The gods were unable
to see clearly.
The yajña-fire
died down.
The gods shuddered
in terror.

13 With a fearful arrow
he pierced the heart
of the yajña.
The yajña became a deer
and ran off
with the fire.

14 In the form of a deer
he shone in the sky.
But the hunter Rudra-Śiva,
Yudhiṣṭhira,
pursued him
wherever he fled.

15 With the yajña gone,
the gods became confused
and bewildered beings.
Losing their sense
of perception,
they were stupefied.

16 Three-eyed Tryambaka-Śiva
angrily sliced with his bow
the arms of Savitā,
gouged the eyes of Bhaga,
and smashed all the teeth
of Pūṣā.

17 The gods and the different
constituents of the yajña
immediately fled.
Some kept rolling
and rolling on the ground
as if demented.

18 With the tip of his bow,
Śitikaṇṭha Blue-Throated
Śiva laughed
and mocked their confusion,
and then abruptly
he paralysed them.

19 But the cries of the gods,
O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
snapped the string of the bow.
With its string broken,
the bow now became
as straight as a line.

20 With the yajña the gods
approached the bow-bereft
greatest of the gods,
seeking his favour,
and the lord of the gods
granted them protection.

21 Delighted, Bhagavān Śiva
flung away his anger
in the depths of the sea.
As the submarine Vaḍavā-fire,
lord Yudhiṣṭhira,
it continues to burn.

22 O Pāṇḍava! To Bhaga
he returned the eyes,
to Savitā the arms,
to Pūṣā the teeth,
and to the gods
he restored their yajña.

23 *Prabhu*-lord Yudhiṣṭhira!
The world once again
returned to normal.
And the gods gave to Śiva
his share of offerings
made at the yajña.

24 When Śiva is angry,
the world becomes unbalanced.
When Śiva is propitiated,
normality returns.
It must be valiant Śiva
was pleased with Aśvatthāman.

25 That is why your sons,
all maha-chariot-heroes,
became such easy targets
for Aśvatthāman,
and not only they,
but the Pāñcāla heroes also.

26 Forget all that now.
What happened
was not the work of Aśvatthāman.
It happened through
the grace of Mahādeva-Śiva.
Keep that in mind.
Prepare to do now
what needs to be done now."

This internationally accepted system of Roman transliteration of the Devanāgari alphabet is followed in this transcreation.

VOWELS

Guttural	अ	आ	
	a	ā	
Palatal	इ	ई	
	i	ī	
Labial	उ	ऊ	
	u	ū	
Dental	ऋ		
	ṛ		
Guttural-Palatal		ए	ऐ
	e	ei	
Guttural-Labial		ओ	औ
	o	au	

CONSONANTS

Guttural	क	ख	ग	घ	ङ	ह	:
	k	kh	g	gh	ṅ	h	ḥ
Palatal	च	छ	ज	झ	ञ	य	श
	c	ch	j	jh	ñ	y	ś
Lingual	ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण	र	ष
	ṭ	ṭh	ḍ	ḍh	ṇ	r	ṣ
Dental	त	थ	द	ध	न	ल	स
	t	th	d	dh	n	l	s
Labial	प	फ	ब	भ	म	व	
	p	ph	b	bh	m	v	

Anusvāra = ṁ

The Transcreator

P. Lāl is honorary Professor of English in St. Xavier's College, Calcutta. He was Special Professor of Indian Studies at Hofstra University, New York, 1962-63, and has lectured widely on Indian literature at English, American, and Australian universities. He was a delegate from India to the P. E. N. International Writers Conference in New York in June 1966, and Visiting Professor in the University of Illinois for the spring semester of 1968. Transcreated the Bṛhadāraṇyaka and Mahānārānayaṇa Upaniṣads on a Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship award in 1969-70. Visiting Professor of Comparative Literature, Hofstra University, spring 1971. Distinguished Visiting Professor and Consultant, Albion College, April-May 1972. Prentiss M. Brown Distinguished Visiting Professor, Albion College, January-May 1973. Robert Norton Visiting Professor, Ohio University, September 1973-June 1974. Visiting Professor of Indian Culture, Hartwick College, September-October 1975. Eli Lilly Visiting Professor, Berea College, February-May 1977. Honorary Doctorate of Letters, Western Maryland College, 1977. Currently at work on the complete English version of the Mahābhārata. Born 1928, married Shyamasree Devi 1955; has a son Ananda, and a daughter Srimati. Recipient of the Padma Shri award in 1970. Delegate to Asian Poets' Conference, Bangkok, 1988; Cambridge Literary Seminar, 1989; Harborfront Poetry Reading Series, Toronto, Canada, 1989. Appointed Suniti Kumar Chatterji Lecturer of the Asiatic Society, Kolkata in June 2005. Seventy five cassettes (each of 90 minutes' duration) of P. Lāl reading his transcreation of Vyāsa's Mahābhārata are available from WRITERS WORKSHOP. In October 1999 P. Lal began a śloka-by-śloka public reading of the transcreated epic to a miscellaneous group every Sunday morning for an hour at the Library of Dharma and Culture in Calcutta to illustrate the importance of Vyāsa's work as an inspiring *oral* experience and not just a print-culture masterpiece, the long-term reading project to proceed till the hundred thousand and plus ślokas are exhausted. 410 hour-long CDs of this recording, taped live are available from WW.

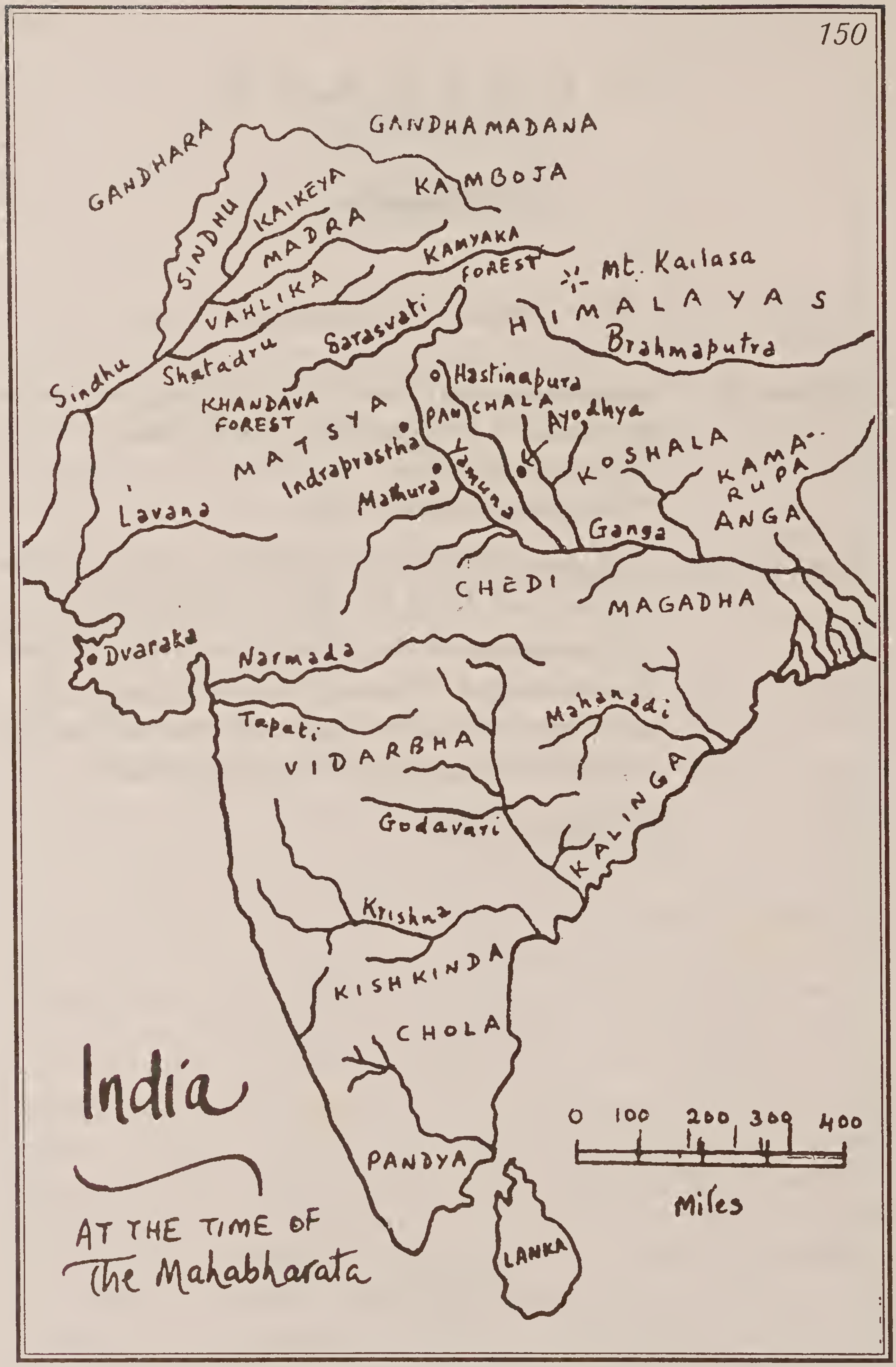
C O N T E N T S

Sauptikaparva

The Chronicle of the Massacre

Courtesy:

Madhusraba Dasgupta
Samsad Companion to the Mahābhārata
(Sahitya Samsad, Kolkata, 1999)

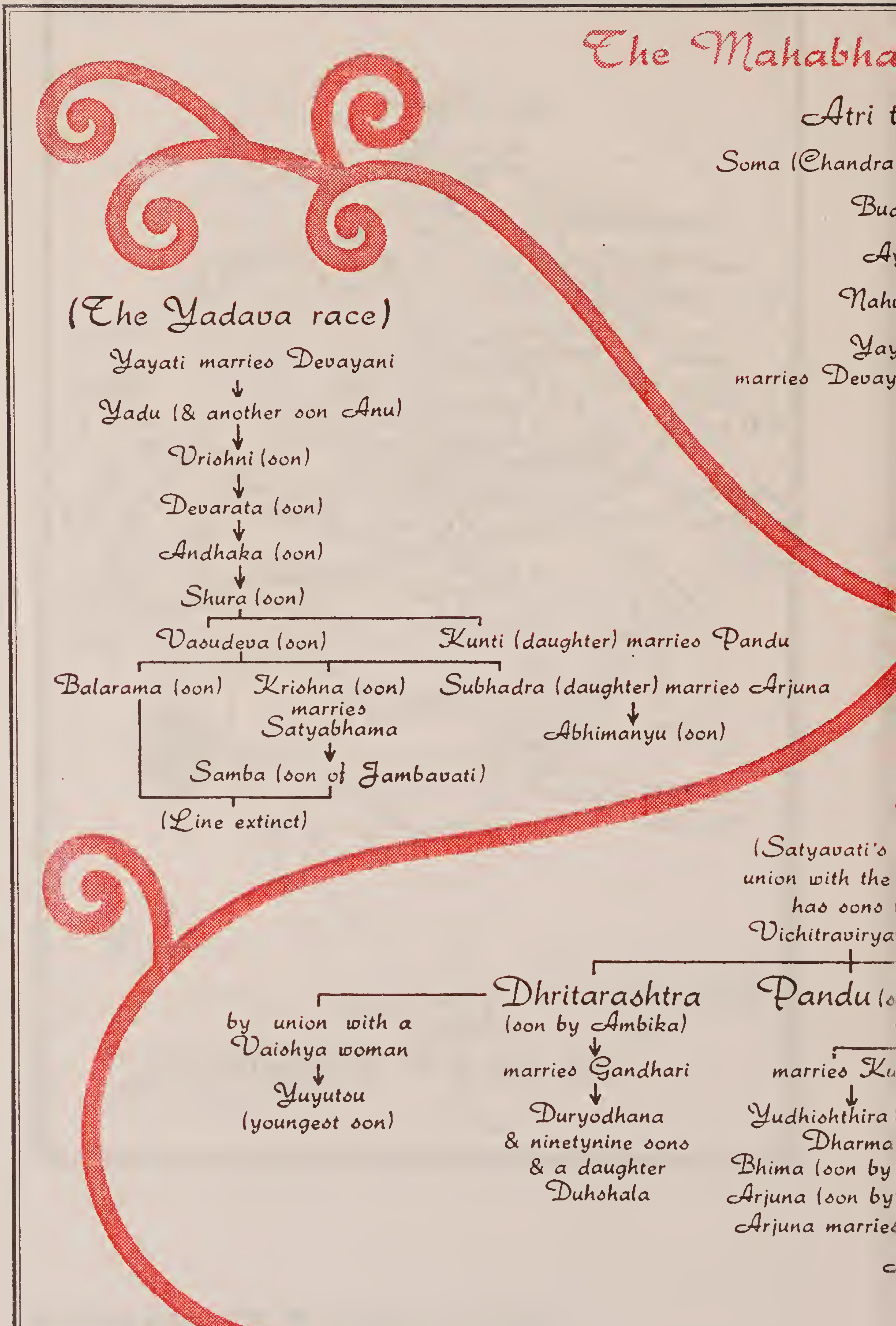


Sketch by P. Lal



Ārya-varta
at the time of the Mahābhārata

Sketch by P. Lal based on *The Historical Atlas of South Asia*
[University of Minnesota]



Sketch by Srimati Lal

a Family Tree

-Rishi

'ndu) the Moon

on)

n)

son)

on)

Sharmishtha

(The Paurava & Kaurava race)

Yayati marries Sharmishtha

↓

Puru (& 2 other sons: Druhyu & Turvasu)

↓

Dushyanta (son) marries Shakuntala

↓

Bharata (son)

↓

Hastin (son)

↓

Kuru (son)

↓

Shantanu (son) marries Satyavati

pre-marriage union with Ganga

↓

Bhishma (son)

yasa
by her pre-marriage
Parashara; Vyasa
e two widows of
nbika & Ambalika)

Chitrangada
(son) (dies childless)

Vichitravirya (son)
marries Ambika & Ambalika
(their eldest sister Amba,
reborn male as Shikhandin,
kills Bhishma in the war)

Ambalika)

Vidura (son by
low caste woman)

and Madri

by

↓

Nakula & Sahadeva
(twin sons by Ashvins)

yu)
dra)
bhadra

manyu (son) marries Uttara

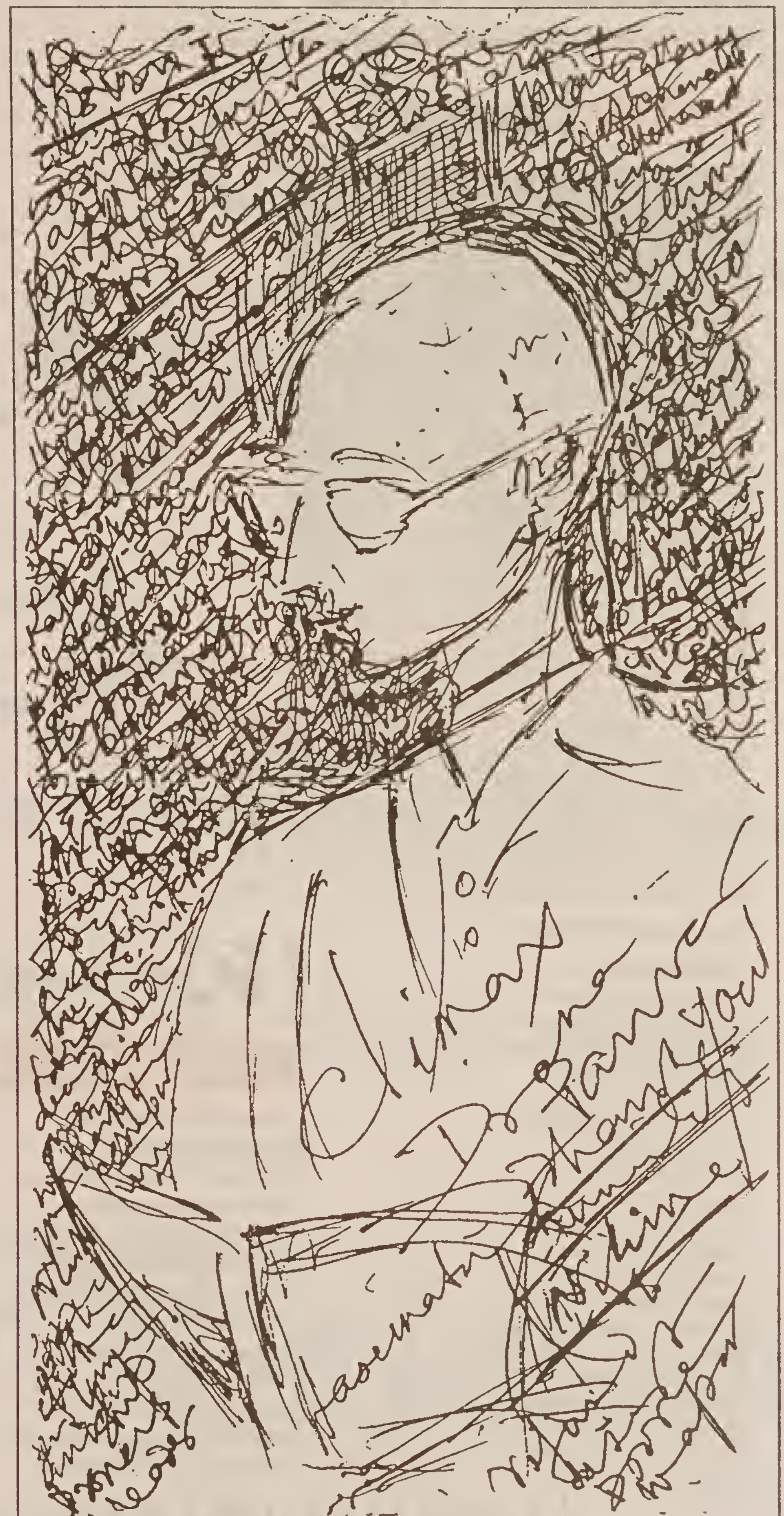
↓

Parikshit (son)

↓

Janamejaya (son)





P. Lāl reading the 334th weekly Sunday session of his English transcreation of Vyāsa's Mahābhārata on 2 July 2006 at G. D. Birla Sabhagar, Kolkata.

[*Sketch by Nilima Sen-Gangopadhyay*]

HINDUSTAN TIMES

Kolkata Calendar



One of the paintings displayed at Aakriti Art Gallery

READING SESSION

GD Birla Sabhagar
Professor P Lal reads Sanjaya's report to raja Dhritarastra of Kaurava's under Duryodhana implementing Karna's strategy by ordering a suicide squad of Samsaptaka vow - committed warriors to penetrate the ranks of Yudhisthira, who is protected by Arjuna's tactical deployment, in the 406th weekly Sunday session of his sloka English transcreation of Vyasa's complete *Mahabharata*, presented by Sanskriti Sagar on January 6 at 11 am.

2 t2 The Telegraph

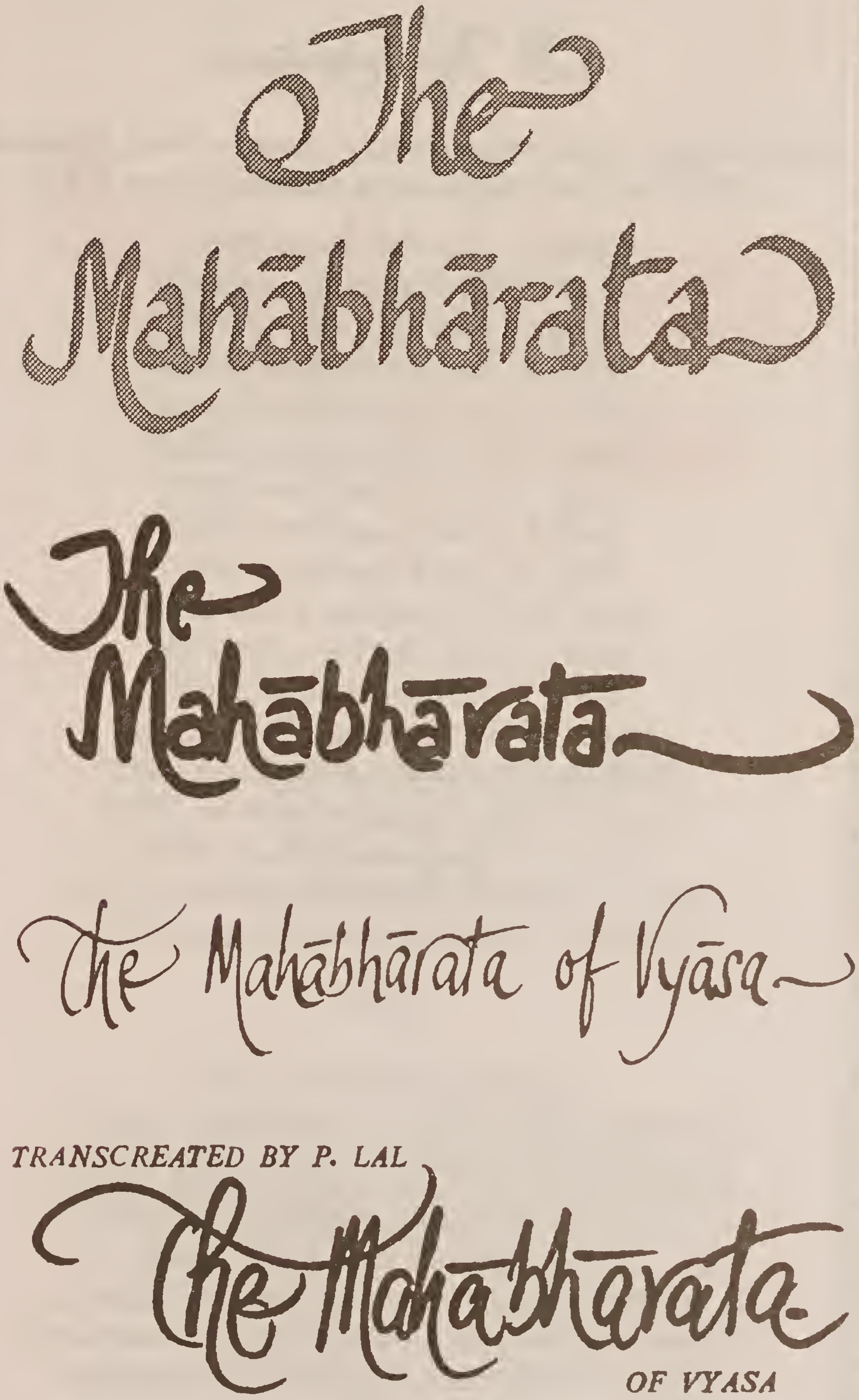
READING

January 13 at G.D. Birla Sabhagar; 11 am: Professor P. Lal reads Sanjaya's report of a fierce clash between the armies of Karna and Yudhisthira, and the disastrous retreat of Karna's warriors pledged to capture Yudhisthira, in the 407th weekly session of his sloka-by-sloka English transcreation of Vyasa's *Mahabharata*.

The Sunday Statesman

ENGAGEMENTS

- **Prof P Lal** reads the clash on Kurukshetra between Karna and Yudhisthira in the 407th session of his English transcreation of Vyasa's Mahabharata at G D Birla Sabhagar: [illegible]



The evolution of wrap-around title-flaps of P. Lāl's monthly Mahābhārata fascicules of the Sabhā Parva that appeared from WRITERS WORKSHOP in 1969-1970 as hardbound volumes 27-37.

ॐ The Mahābhārata

Appearing in single-volume format from WRITERS WORKSHOP
The Complete Mahābhārata transcreated by P. Lāl

Book 1 : The Ādi Parva (2005)
Book 2 : The Sabhā Parva (2005)
Book 3 : The Vana Parva (2005)
Book 4 : The Virāṭa Parva (2006)
Book 5 : The Udyoga Parva (2006)
Book 6 : The Bhīṣma Parva (2006)
Book 7 : The Droṇa Parva (2007)
Book 8 : The Karṇa Parva (2007)
Book 9 : The Śalyá Parva (2007)
Book 10 : The Sauptika Parva (2007)
Book 11 : The Śtrī Parva (2007-08)
Book 12 : The Śānti Parva (2007)
Book 13 : The Anuśāsana Parva (2008)
Book 14 : The Āśvamedhika Parva (2007)
Book 15 : The Āśramavāsika Parva (2007)
Book 16 : The Mausala Parva (2006)
Book 17 : The Mahāprasthānika Parva (2006)
Book 18 : The Svargārohaṇa Parva (2006)

Appearing from WW in 2007

Prefaces & Notes to Vyāsa's Ādi Parva
Prefaces and Notes to Vyāsa's Sabhā Parva
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Śakuntalā Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Yayāti Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Mandapāla Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Draupadī-Svayamvara Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Sāvitrī-Satyavān Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Nala-Damayantī Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Śiśupāla-Vadha Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Yakṣa-Yudhiṣṭhira Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Rāmāyaṇa Kathā

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa

Transcreated from Sanskrit
by P. Lal

On the following pages are facsimile reproductions of pages from different Mahābhārata fascicules (#264-270) of the Sauptika Parva, showing the Sanskrit notes and calligraphy fascicules and additions by P. Lal. These were prepared for the reading sessions of the transcreation, presented under the auspices of the Sanskriti Sagar in the Library of Dharma and Culture at the G.D. Birla Sabhagar in Kolkata. Started in October 1999, P. Lal has so far (February 2008) read 410 one-hour sessions, followed by question-and-answer periods of up to half an hour.

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa

Transcreated from the Sanskrit by P. Lāl

Volume 264

The Drauṇi-mantraṇāyaṁ & Drauṇi-Kṛpa-saṁvāda parvas in the Sauptika Parva

SECTION 1

1 The three heroes proceeded southwards
(continued Sañjaya),
and by the time evening fell,
they reached the Pāṇḍava camp.

2 Afraid of being discovered,
they freed their horses,
and took shelter in
a dense nearby forest.

9 That is how learned friends
do their best
to dissuade an intelligent friend
from misbehaviour,
repeatedly instructing
and warning him.

10 Tāta! My dear friend!
Use your ātman
to get a grip on your ātman
for your own welfare.
Listen to me ~
and not repent later.

11 In this world of ours,
dharma does not sanction
killing a sleeping person,
a person who has laid down
his weapons, a person
unhorsed or unchárioted,

52 Holding his bow, his fingers
encased in iguana-
skin protectors, Droṇa's son
Aśvatthāman offered
his whole ātman-self
as sacrifice to Śiva.

53 O Bharata descendant!
In that self-offering,
his bow was the samidha-fuel,
his sharp arrows
the pavitra-ladles,
his ātman the libation.

54 Mahā-enraged and valiant
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
offered his ātman-self
with this soma-mantra:
आप्यायस्व समेतु ते विश्वतः
सोम वृष्ण्यम् । भवा वाजस्य संगथे ।

129 Like Lord-of-creatures
Paśupati-Śiva,
enraged, slaughtering life,
enraged Aśvatthāman
slaughtered the hiding,
the helpless and the hopeless.

130 Drona's son Aśvatthāman
butchered them
indiscriminately ~ those
who clung to each other,
those fleeing, those hiding,
those bewildered.

131 On one side trapped
in the flames,
on the other slaughtered
by Aśvatthāman,
the warriors went to
the abode of Yama.

Transcreated by P. Lal

2 The sūta-charioteer said:
" O rājā!
The sons of Draupadī
and Drupada's children
have all been slaughtered
in their innocent sleep.

3 The entire camp
has been wiped out
by a concerted attack
by cruel Kṛtavarman,
Gautama-Kṛpa,
and wicked Aśvatthāman.

4 They have decimated your ranks
of soldiers, horses
and elephants, slaying thousands
with prāsa-barbed darts,
śakti-spears,
and paraśu-axes.

13 'Krishna! My truly valiant
father, ācārya Droṇa
of the Bharata dynasty,
after intense tapasya,
succeeded in obtaining
from Agastya

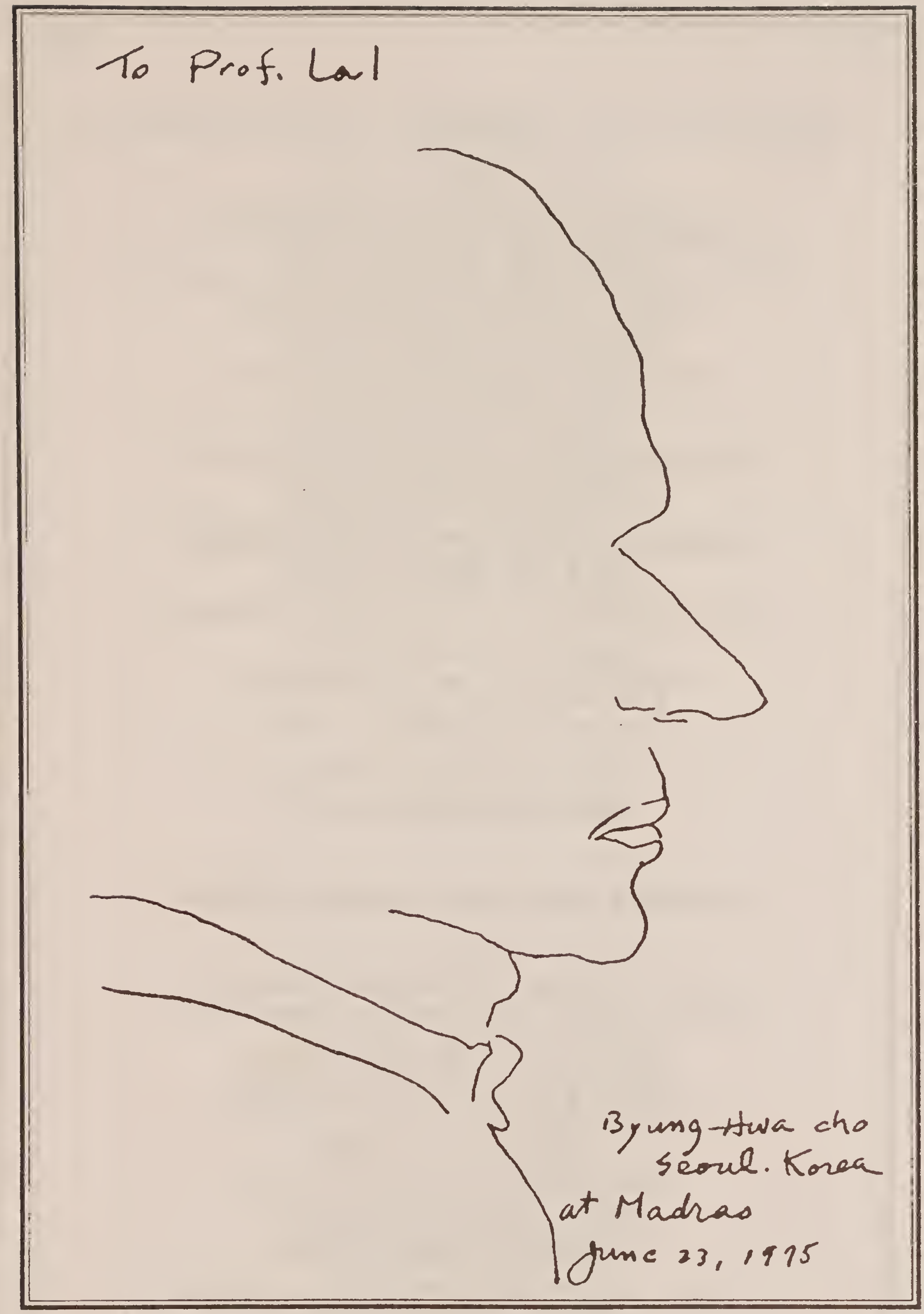
14 The missile called the Brahmaśira
which is pūjā-respected
by gods and gandharvas.
That missile, O Dāśārha,
which was once with my father,
is now with me.

15 O finest of the Yādavas!
Accept from me
this divine missile, and
give me in exchange
your all-foe obliterating
cakra-missile.'

9 And suddenly,
thunder pealed,
thousands of meteors
fell from the sky,
and fear gripped
all living creatures.

10 Cacophony crackled
in the sky,
and lapping flames
licked the directions
The hill-forest-and-plant-
filled earth trembled.

11 And as the flames
began laying waste
all the worlds,
there appeared
on the scene
two mahā-ṛṣis :



A CHECKLIST OF HIS BOOKS

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162/92 Lake Gardens Kolkata 700 045 India
Phone: 2417 4325, 2417 2683, 3095 9727
Fax: 2417 2683
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AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Lessons (2nd revised and enlarged ed. 2002)
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BIBLIOGRAPHY

An Annotated Mahabharata Bibliography
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WRITERS WORKSHOP
Indian Creative Writing in English

WRITERS WORKSHOP was founded in 1958. It consists of a group of writers who agree in principle that English has proved its ability, as a language, to play a creative role in Indian literature, through original writing and transcreation from India, the Commonwealth, and other English-using territories. Discussions are held on Sunday morning at 162/92 Lake Gardens, Kolkata 700 045, India, and diffusion done through a series of Bird-logo books issued under the WORKSHOP imprint. Since October 1999 the Sunday one-hour morning session is devoted to a śloka-by-śloka reading by P. Lal at the Sanskriti Sagar Library in Calcutta, of his complete English transcreation of the Mahābhārata of Vyāsa, planned to continue for the next ten years, till the epic is completed. Since 1971 the WORKSHOP has laid increasing emphasis on its publishing programme. A complete, descriptive 90-page illustrated checklist of over 3200 books and cassettes is available for Rs. 20.

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WRITERS WORKSHOP ~ A Credo by P. Lal

Glory be to Mahakala. It is now 2008. I am four score. Time for some home truths. Because WRITERS WORKSHOP has close to 3200 separate titles in its checklist (published over 50 years 1958-2008), and because it has averaged around 100 titles each year since 1995, there is a misconception that it is an Indian publishing leviathan. (No other publisher in India has that many titles on its annual list.) The truth is much less awesome. WRITERS WORKSHOP has no office; it operates from my residence, from the living-room and a multi-purpose bedroom. It has no secretary; my "secretary" is a three-tiered Godrej filing cabinet. It has no editor, no "readers" to inspect, evaluate and OK typescripts; I do all three tasks. It has no proofreader; I perform the nitty-gritty of deleting, accreting and correcting. It has no "assistant" to acknowledge or follow up letters; I do all that too. It has no typewriter; I reply in longhand. (From 2004, kowtowing to the hi-tech convenience, I sometimes seek help from my computer-savvy grand-daughter Shuktara to e-mail replies to insistent and urgent enquiries for WW information.) It has no retail or wholesale distribution "outlet"; there is only a cubby-hole of a kiosk at my residence (8 feet x 4 feet roughly) called the Book Nook, where a dedicated young assistant attends to intermittent sales of WW books. This Lake Gardens kiosk opened in 1998, 40 years after WW's inception.

How then has WW survived? Without plush foundations to back it, without advertisement, without large-hearted patrons? Initially, by the skin of our teeth (1958-1964). Then (1965-1990) by my visits to hard currency lands, specially Great Britain, the USA and Australia on lecture assignments and visiting professorships on two dozen or so occasions, and pumping the shekels thus earned to keep alive a gasping ideal.

Alternative publishing is desperately needed wherever commercial publication rules. WW is *not* a professional publishing house. It does not print well-known names; it makes names known and well known, and then leaves them in the loving clutches of the so-called "free" market (which can be and is very cut-throat and very expensive). It is not sad, it is obnoxious, to plead, as publishers do, "I will not publish poetry because it does not sell." Most English book publishing today in boom-time India and outside is book-dumping. There is a nexus between high-profile PR-conscious book publishers, semi-literate booksellers, moribund public and state libraries, poorly informed and nepotistic underlings in charge of book review pages and supplements of most national newspapers and magazines, and biased bulk purchases of near worthless books by bureaucratic institutions set up--believe it or not!--to inform, educate and elevate the reading public.

Because WW goes in for serious creative writing, and because there is no satisfactory distribution network for such writing, its terms of publication are unique. I must be the only publisher in the world who knows when and where every book is sold; I have the name and address of every buyer of a WW book. Upon my acceptance of a typescript, an agreement form is sent to the writer. *All* copyright remains with the writer. Poetry appears in 350 copies; prose in 500. Ten per cent (35 copies of the poetry book, 50 of the prose) is given in lieu of royalty. The writer is also expected to make an advance purchase of 100 copies of his or her book, for sale or distribution as he or she pleases. Printing is done in Calcutta hand-operated presses, situated in the residences of their owners. The whole process is a cottage industry style low-key entrepreneurship, in the belief that small is not only beautiful but viable as well. Vanity and sponsored publishing? Yes, I am humanly vain about it and I do sponsor what I think is good writing. If any lover of literature will offer to subsidise, with no strings attached, striking new work by talented Indian poets, fiction-writers and belles-lettrists, please get in touch with me. The gesture will be acknowledged, appreciated, accepted, and implemented. Such Good Samaritan generosities, not market forces, are at the root of civilised and significant publishing the world over.

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